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THE CLOSE OF THE MINISTRY.

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THE

CLOSE OF THE MINISTRY.

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BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HANNA, D.D. LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE LAST DAY OF OUR LORD'S PASSION."

EDINBURGH:
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.
1869.

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

I.—THE DESCENT OF THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION, ... 1

II.—THE PAYMENT OF THE TRIBUTE-MONEY—THE STRIFE AS TO WHO SHOULD BE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, . . . 23

III.—CHRIST AND HIS BRETHREN, . . . 42

IV.—CHRIST AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES, . 61

V.—JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, . . 81

VI.—THE CURE OF THE MAN BORN BLIND, . . 101

VII.—THE GOOD SHEPHERD, ... 125

VIII.—INCIDENTS IN OUR LORD'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM, ... 156

IX.—OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN PERÆA, . . 177

X.—THE PARABLES OF THE PERÆAN MINISTRY, . 200

XI.—THE GOOD SAMARITAN, . . . 226

XII.—THE LORD'S PRAYER, ... 246

PAGE

XIII.—JESUS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE, . 266

XIV.—THE RAISING OF LAZARUS, ... 292

XV.—THE LAST JOURNEY THROUGH PERÆA: THE TEN LEPERS—THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM—THE QUESTION OF DIVORCE — LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO HIM—THE YOUNG RULER, . 313

XVI.—JESUS AT JERICHO—THE REQUEST OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE, ... 336.

XVII.—THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY, ... 358

I.

THE DESCENT OF THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION.[1]

MORNING has dawned upon the mountain-top which had witnessed the wonderful night-scene of the transfiguration. Jesus and the three disciples begin to descend. The silence they at first observe is broken by our Lord turning to his disciples and saying, 'Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.' A few days before, Jesus had straitly charged them that they should tell no man that he was the Christ. The discovery would be premature. The people were not prepared for it. It would come unsuitably as well as unseasonably from the lips of the apostles. It might serve to interrupt that course of things which was to guide onward to the great decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. And whatever rea-

[1] Matt. xvii. 9-27; Mark ix. 9-32; Luke ix. 37-45.

sons there were for a temporary concealment from the multitude of such knowledge as to their Master's true character and office as the apostles possessed, still stronger reasons were there that they should preserve silence as to this vision on the Mount, the narration of which would be sure at that time to provoke nothing but derision. Not even to the other nine were the three to speak of it till the key to its true interpretation was in all their hands, for even by them, in the meantime, it was little likely to be rightly apprehended, and it was not a topic to be rudely handled as a thing of idle and ignorant talk. The seal thus put upon the lips of the three, we have no reason to believe was broken till the time came when they stood relieved from the obligation it imposed. All the more curiously would the matter be scanned by the three when alone. The thing that most perplexed them as they did so was, what the rising from the dead could mean. They did not venture to put any question to their Master. Now, upon the mountain side, as afterwards, they were afraid to ask him about it, with something perhaps of the feeling of those

who do not like to ask more about a matter which has saddened them so much to hear about at all; from all fuller and distincter sight of which they shrink.

But there was a question, and that a very natural one in the existing circumstances, which they did venture to put to Jesus by the way. They had just seen Elias standing by the side of their Master, to be with him in that brief interview, and then depart. Was this that coming of the Great Prophet about which the scribes spoke so much? It could scarcely be so, for that coming was to precede the advent of the Messiah. But if Jesus were the Christ, and this which they had just witnessed were the coming of Elias, the prescribed prophetic order would be reversed. In the uncertainty and confusion of their thoughts they put the question to their Master, "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" Jesus had already—months before—on the occasion of the visit of the two disciples of the Baptist, said to them plainly enough, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was to come." They had not fully understood or received it. In common with

the whole body of their countrymen, their original idea had been, that it was to be an actual return of Elijah himself to the earth which was to be the precursor of the appearance of their Messiah. This conception the sayings of Jesus may have served partially to rectify; but now, when Elijah comes and presents himself before their eyes, it returns, and in returning blinds and confuses them once more. Our Lord's answer is so far clear enough, that he confirms the dictum of the scribes as founded on a right reading of the ancient prophecies, especially of the one by Malachi, recorded in the fourth chapter of that prophet's writings. It was true what these scribes had said, that Elias must first come. But they were in error when they looked for a personal visit from the old prophet as the precursor of the first advent of the Christ. They had failed to see in the person and ministry of John one coming in the spirit and power of Elias. They had taken too hastily the Baptist at his word when he said he was not Elias, as in a literal sense he was not. And misapprehending his character and mission, they had allowed their

natural dislike to such a person and ministry as his to grow till it culminated in that act of Herod, by which the disliked preacher of righteousness was cut off. Once more, therefore, does Jesus renew the testimony he had already borne to the Baptist: "I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." The treatment they gave to the forerunner was no inapt symbol of that which they were preparing for Christ himself; for "likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them."

Then the disciples understood that "he spake unto them of John the Baptist." But did they understand that in his answer to their inquiry our Lord alluded to another, a future coming of Elias, of which that of the Baptist was but a type or a prelude, as well as to another, a future coming of the Son of man with which it was to be connected? Many think that not obscurely, such an allusion lay in the words which Christ employed, and that it is in the two advents, each prefaced with its appropriate precursorage, that the full and varied language of ancient prophecy

receives alone its fit and adequate accomplishment.

But we must now turn our eye from the little group conversing about Elias, as they descended the hill-side, to what was occurring elsewhere, down in the valley among the villages that lay at the base of the mountain. Among the villagers there had occurred a case of rare and complicated distress. A youth, the only son of his father, had fallen the victim to strange and fearful paroxysms, in which his own proper speech was taken from him, and he uttered hideous sounds, and foamed, and gnashed with his teeth, and was cast sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water, from which he was drawn with difficulty, and half dead. To bodily and mental distemper, occult and incurable, there was added demoniac possession, mingling itself with and adding new horrors to the terrible visitations. With the arrival of Christ and his disciples in this remote region there had come the fame of the wonderful cures that he had elsewhere effected; cures, many of them, of the very same kind of malady with which this youth was so grievously afflicted. On learn-

ing that the company of Galilean strangers had arrived in the neighbourhood of his own dwelling, the father of this youth thought that the time had come of relief from that heavy domestic burden that for years he had been bearing. He brought to them his son. Unfortunately, it so happened that he brought him when Christ and the three disciples were up in the mountain, and the nine were left behind. It was to them, therefore, that the application for relief was made. It does not appear that when in company with Christ the disciples were in the habit of claiming or exercising any preternatural power over disease. No case at least of a cure effected by their hands in such circumstances is recorded. But in that short experimental tour, when they had been sent out away from him to go two by two through Galilee, Jesus had given them power over unclean spirits—a power which they had exercised without check or failure. And now, when they are left alone, and this most painful case is brought to them, they imagine that the same power is in their hands, and they essay to exercise it. In their Master's name again and again they com-

mand that unclean spirit to go forth, but their words return to them void. They stand baffled and covered with confusion before the crowd that had gathered to witness the cure. They can give no reason, for they know none, why the failure had taken place. Nor are they suffered to skulk away in their defeat. Some scribes are there ready enough to take advantage of the awkward dilemma into which they have been thrown by assuming an authority which turns out to be impotent—their Master's character involved in their defeat. We can well imagine what an instrument of reproach would be put thus into the hands of these scribes, and how diligently and effectively they would employ it; pressing the disciples with questions to which they could give no satisfactory replies, and turning the whole occurrence to the best account in the way of casting discredit upon the Master, as well as upon his disciples. A great multitude had in the meantime assembled; a profane, and scoffing, and half-malignant spirit had been stealing into the hearts of many, when Jesus and the three are seen coming down from the hill-side. The

suddenness of his appearance—his coming at the very time that his disciples were hard pressed, perhaps, too, the very calmness and majesty of his appearance, as some of that glory of the mountain-top still lingers around him—produces a quick revolution of feeling in the fickle multitude. Straightway a kind of awe—half admiration, half alarm—comes over them, and "greatly amazed," they leave the scribes and the discomfited disciples, and they run to him and salute him—not in mockery, certainly, or hailing him as one whose claims upon their homage they are ready to set aside—but rather with a rebound from their recent incredulity, prepared to pay to him the profounder respect. And now, as on some battle-field which subordinate officers have entered in absence of their chief, and in which they have been worsted by the foe, at the crisis of the day the chief himself appears, and at once the tide of battle turns—so acts the presence of Christ. Bearing back with him the multitude that had run forth to greet him, he comes up to where the scribes are dealing with the apostles, and says to them, "What

question ye with them?" The questioners are struck dumb—stand silent before the Lord. In the midst of the silence a man comes forward, kneels down before Jesus, tells him what has happened, how fearful the malady was that had fallen upon his only child, how he had brought the child to his disciples and they had failed to cast the devil out of him. Too much occupied with his own grief, too eager to seize the chance now given, that the Master may do what his disciples could not, he makes no mention of the scribes, or of the hostile feeling against him they have been attempting to excite. But Jesus knows it all, sees how in all the various regions then around him, in the hearts of the people who speak to him, in the hearts of the disciples from whom he had temporarily been parted, in the hearts of those scribes who had been indulging in an unworthy and premature triumph, the spirit of incredulity had been acting. Contemplating the sad picture of prevailing unbelief, there bursts from his lips the mournful ejaculation, "O faithless, incredulous, and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you

and you remain ignorant of who and what I am? How shall I suffer you, as you continue to exhibit such want of trust in my willingness and power to help and save you?" Not often does Christ give us any insight into the personal emotions stirred up within his heart by the scenes among which he moves—not often does there issue from his lips anything approaching to complaint. Here for a moment, out of the fulness of his heart he speaketh, revealing as he does so a fountain-head of sorrow lying deep within his soul, the fulness and bitterness of whose waters, as they were so constantly rising up to flood and overflow his spirit, who can gauge? What must it have been for Jesus Christ to come into such close familiar contact with the misconceptions and incredulities, and dislikes and oppositions of the men he lived among? With a human nature like our own, yet far more exquisitely sensitive than ours to injustice and false reproach, what a constant strain and burden must thus have been laid upon his heart! What an incalculable amount of patience must it have called him to exercise!

The brief lament over the faithless and per-

verse generation uttered, Jesus says to the father, "Bring thy son hither." And now follows a scene to which there are few parallels in scriptural or in any other story, for our vivid conception of which we are specially indebted to the graphic pen of the second Evangelist. They go for the youth and bring him. So soon as he comes into the presence of Jesus, and their eyes meet, whether it was that the calm, benignant, heavenly look of Christ operated as a kind of stimulant upon a worn-out, weak, unstrung, excitable, nervous system, or that the devil, knowing that his time was short, would raise one last and vehement commotion within that poor distracted frame, the youth falls to the ground, wallowing, foaming, torn by a power he is unable to resist. Jesus looks upon him as he lies, and all who are around look at Jesus, wondering what he will do. Is it easy to imagine a conjunction of outward circumstances more striking or affecting? The youth writhing on the ground, Jesus bending on him a look of ineffable pity, the father standing on the tip-toe of eager expectation, the disciples, the scribes, the multitude, pressing on to witness

the result. Such was the season, such were the circumstances, that Jesus chose for one of the shortest but most memorable of his conversations. Before he says or does anything as to the son, he says, quietly, inquiringly, compassionately, to the father: "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" The father tells how long, and tells how terrible it has been; but as if somewhat impatient at such a question being put at such a time, he adds, "But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Genuine and pathetic utterance of a deep-smitten fatherly affection, identifying itself with the object of its love, and intent upon the one thing of getting that child cured; all right here in the father's feeling toward his son, but something wrong, something defective in the feeling toward Christ, which for the man's own sake, and for his son's sake, and for the sake of that gathered crowd, and for the sake of us, and of all who shall ever read this narrative, Jesus desired to seize upon this opportunity to correct. "If thou canst do anything," the father says. "If thou canst believe," is our Lord's quick reply. 'It is not as thou takest it,

a question as to the extent of My power, but altogether of the strength of thy faith, for if thou canst but believe, all things are possible, this thing can easily be done.' Receiving the rebuke in the spirit in which it was given, awaking at once to see and believe that it was his want of faith that stood in the way of his son's cure, sensible that he had been wrong in challenging Christ's power, that Christ was right in challenging his faith, with a flood of tears that told how truly humble and broken his spirit was, the man cries out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Who is not grateful to the man who lets us see into that tumult and agony of soul in which true faith is born, how it is that out of the dull and fearful spirit of mistrust the genuine child-like confidence of the heart in Jesus struggles into being. "Lord, I believe." 'I have a trust in thee. I know that thou hast all power at thy command, and canst exercise it as thou wilt. But when I look at that which this power of thine is now called to do, my faith begins to falter. Lord, help mine unbelief. Thou only canst do it. Thou only canst strengthen this

weak and failing heart of mine. It is thine to cure the bodily distemper of my son. It is thine to heal the spiritual infirmities of my soul.' What a mixture here of weakness and strength—the cry for help betraying the one, yet in that very cry the other standing revealed! Few utterances that have come from human lips have carried more in them of the spirit that we should all seek to cherish, nor would it be easy to calculate how many human beings have taken up the language this man taught them to employ, and who have said to Jesus, "Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief."

In answer to this confession and this prayer, something still further might have been said, had not our Lord perceived a fresh pressure in upon them of the neighbouring crowd, at sight of which he delayed no longer, but, turning to him who still lies upon the ground before him, in words of sternness and decision he says, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." A fresh cry of agony—a last and most violent convulsion—and the poor afflicted youth lies stretched out so

motionless, that many looking at him, say that he is dead. But Jesus takes him by the hand and lifts him up, and delivers him perfectly cured to his glad and grateful father. The work was done, the crowd dispersed, "all amazed at the mighty power of God."

Afterwards, when alone with him in the house, the apostles asked Jesus why it was that they could not cast the devil out. He told them that it was because of their unbelief. They had suffered perhaps that late announcement which he had made to them of his impending sufferings and death to dim or disturb their faith, or they had allowed that still more recent selection of the three, and his withdrawal from them up into the mountain, to engender a jealousy which weakened that faith. One way or other, their faith had given way, and in its absence they had tried the power of their Master's name, in the hope that it might act as a charm or talisman. Jesus would have them know that it was not thus that his name was rightly, or could ever effectively, be employed. Yet at the same time he would have them know that the kind of spirit by which this

youth had been possessed was one not easy of ejection—which required, in fact, on the part of the ejector, such a faith as could only be reached by much prayer and fasting; teaching them thus, in answer to their inquiry, the double lesson—that the primary source of their failure lay in the defect of their faith; and that the manner in which that faith could alone be nourished up to the required degree of strength was by fasting and by prayer, by weaning themselves from the pursuits and enjoyments of sense, by repeated and earnest supplications to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, whose office it is to work in his people the work of faith with power. At the same time Jesus took the opportunity which this private interview with his disciples afforded—as he had taken the opportunity of his interview with the importunate father—to proclaim the great power, the omnipotence of faith.[1] This obviously was the one great lesson which, in this passage of his earthly history, Jesus designed to teach.

Sudden and very striking must have been

[1] Matt. xvii. 20.

the transition from the brightness, the blessedness of that sublime communion with Moses and Elias on the mount, to the close contact with human misery in the shape of the possessed lunatic who lay writhing at his feet; so sharp and impressive the contrast that the prince of painters, in his attempt to picture to our eye the glories of the Transfiguration, has thrown in the figure of the suffering child at the base of the mountain. But more even than by this contact with human misery does our Saviour seem on this occasion to have been impressed by his coming into such close contact with so many forms of human unbelief. And he appears to have framed and selected this as the first occasion on which to announce, not only the need and the benefit, but the illimitable power of faith.

He could easily have arranged it so that no application had been made to his disciples in his absence, but then they had wanted the lesson the failure carried in its bosom. He could easily have cured that maniac boy at once and by a word; but then his father had missed that lesson which, in the short preliminary conversation with

him, was conveyed. And through both, to us and to all, the great truth is made known that in this world of sin and sorrow the prime necessity is, that we should have faith in God and faith in Jesus Christ—not a faith in certain truths or propositions about God or about Jesus Christ—but simple, child-like trust in God as our Father, in Jesus as our Saviour; a faith that will lead us in all times of our weakness and exposure, and temptation and distress, to fly to them to succour us, casting ourselves upon a help that never was refused to those who felt their need of it. Neither for our natural nor for our spiritual life is the physical removal of mountains necessary; if it were, we believe that it would be given in answer to believing prayer; but mountains of difficulty there are, moral and spiritual, which do need to be removed ere our way be made plain, and we be carried smoothly and prosperously along it; corruptions within us to be subdued; temptations without us to be overcome. These must be met, and struggled with, and overcome. It is by the might and mastery of faith and prayer that this can alone be accomplished. And it is no

small comfort for us to be assured, on the word of our Lord himself, that though our faith be small in bulk as the mustard seed, yet if it be genuine, if it humbly yet firmly take hold of the mighty power of God and hang upon it, it will avail to bring that power down to our aid and rescue, so that, weak as we are in ourselves, and strong as the world is to overcome us, yet greater shall he be that is with us than he that is in the world, and we shall be able to do all things through him who strengtheneth us. Prayer, it has been said, moves him who moves the universe. But it is faith which gives to prayer the faculty of linking itself in this way with Omnipotence, and calling it to human aid. And so you find that, in one of the other two instances in which Jesus made use of the same expressions as to the power of faith which he employed upon this occasion, he coupled faith and prayer together. "Master," said Peter, wondering at the effect which a single word of Jesus had produced,—"Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering said unto them, Have faith in God. For

verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Wonderful words, assigning an all-embracing, an absolutely unlimited efficacy to faith and prayer—words not to be lightly judged of, as if they were intended to encourage the rash and the ignorant conceits and confidences of a presumptuous enthusiasm—but words of truth and soberness, notwithstanding the width and compass of their embrace, if only we remember that true faith will confide in God, or Christ, only for that as to which he invites, and so warrants, its confidence; and true prayer will ask for that alone which is agreeable to the will of God, and will promote the spiritual and eternal good of him upon whom it is bestowed. These are the conditions—natural and reasonable—which underlie all that Christ has said of the power of faith and prayer. And

within these conditions we accept all that he has said as true in itself, and wanting only a firmer faith, and a more undoubting prayer than we have exercised or put forth, to receive its fulfilment in our own experience.

II.

THE PAYMENT OF THE TRIBUTE-MONEY—THE STRIFE AS TO WHO SHOULD BE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.[1]

FROM his retirement in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea-Philippi Jesus returned to Galilee—not, however, to resume his public ministry there. He sought privacy now, even among the scenes of his former labours—a privacy that he wished to consecrate to the further enlightenment of the twelve as to his own character and office, and the true nature of the kingdom he came to institute.[2] It was in fulfilment of this purpose that on the way from the scene of the Transfiguration to his old haunts about Capernaum, he made a second announcement of his impending death and resurrection, adding to the details of his passion for-

[1] Matt. xvii. 22-27; xviii. 1-35; Mark ix. 33-41; Luke ix. 43-50.
[2] Mark ix. 30, 31.

merly given that of his betrayal. So hid was the meaning of Christ's words, that all that the apostles appear to have derived from them was a vague impression that some great and decisive events in their Master's history were drawing near, in contemplation of which they began disputing among themselves which should be greatest in the kingdom which they hoped to see so soon set up,—keeping, as they imagined, their disputings about this topic concealed from Christ.

On their arrival at Capernaum the persons appointed to receive the annual tribute which was paid for the support of the Temple services, came to Peter and said to him, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" Those who put this question were not the publicans or ordinary tax-gatherers who levied the dues laid upon the Jews by their governors the Romans. Nor was the question one about the payment of any common tax, any civil impost. The very form of the question, had it been literally rendered, would have indicated this, "Doth not your Master pay the didrachma?" a modern coin then in circulation, equivalent in value to the old half-shekel,

which, having gone out of use, had become rare. Every Jew of twenty years old and upward was required to give a half-shekel yearly for the maintenance, first of the Tabernacle, and afterwards of the Temple. Although this payment was legally imposed, it does not appear to have been enforced by civil pains or penalties. It was left rather, like other of the Mosaic imposts, to the spontaneous action of conscience, and a good-will towards the theocracy on the part of the people. It was to the payment of this didrachma or half-shekel for the upholding of the Temple and its ordinances, that the question put to St. Peter referred. It is impossible for us to say positively in what spirit or with what motive the question was put. It certainly was not the question of the lynx-eyed collectors of the ordinary revenue, detecting an attempted evasion of the payment of one or other of the common taxes. From no civil obligation laid upon him by law did Jesus ever claim to be exempt, nor would the argument which he used afterwards with the apostle, embodying a claim to exemption in this case, have been applicable to any such obligation. But why

did those to whom the gatherers of this ecclesiastical impost was intrusted speak as they did to St. Peter? Was it from doubt or ignorance on their part as to whether Jesus ought to be asked or now meant to pay this tax? Priests, Levites, prophets, some tell us that even Rabbis, were held to be free from this payment. Had Christ's retirement now from public duty suggested the idea that he had thrown aside that character under which immunity might have been claimed by him, and that he might be called upon therefore to submit to all the ordinary obligations under which every common inhabitant of the country was laid? Or was this a piece of rude impertinence on the part of the under officials of the hierarchy, who, seeing the disfavour into which Jesus had sunk with their superiors, were quick to take advantage of their commission to obtrude a question that seemed to cast some reproach on Christ as if he were a defaulter? Some colour is given to the supposition that it was in a sinister spirit that the inquiry was made from the circumstance of St. Peter's prompt reply—a reply in which there may have been indignation at an

implied suspicion, and a scorn at disputing about such a trifle,—so that without any communication with Jesus he shuts the mouths of these gainsayers by saying, Yes; his Master paid or would pay the tribute. Had the tone in which the question was asked, and the apostle's reply was given, been known to us, we might have told whether it was so or not. As it is, it can only be a conjecture that it was in a hostile and malicious spirit that the collectors of the tribute-money acted. Peter, however, was too rash and hasty. It might be true enough that his Master had no desire to avoid that or any other service which he owed to the Temple and to its worship. It might be safe enough in him to undertake for his Master so trifling a payment, which, whether Jesus acquiesced in the engagement or not, the apostle could easily find the means for meeting. But in such an instant acknowledgment of the obligation there was an overlooking on Peter's part of the dignity of Christ's person, and of his position towards the Temple. To remind him of this oversight, to recall his attention to what was implied in his own recent confession at Cæsarea-Philippi, when

they were come into the house, without waiting for any communication from Peter as to what had occurred, Jesus said to him, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"—those who are not members of their own family—not sons, but subjects. Peter saith to him, "Of the latter, of strangers. Jesus saith to him, Then are the children free." Upon this simple principle Christ would have Peter to recognise his immunity from that tribute which was now claimed—for was he not greater than the Temple? Did he not bear to that Temple the relation of the son in the house of his Father? And did he not as such stand free from all the obligations which the King and Lord of that house had laid upon his servants, his subjects? It will not be easy to show any pertinence assumed in the plea for immunity thus presented, without admitting the altogether peculiar relationship in which Christ stood to the Father. Accept the truth of his divine Sonship to the Father, and the plea holds good; reject that truth, and the plea seems weak and void. And

was it not for the purpose of still further illustrating that very Sonship to God which Peter for the moment had forgotten, that our Lord directed him to do that which in the issue carried with it so remarkable a proof that in the Great Temple of the visible creation Jesus was not a servant but a son; that everywhere within and over that house he ruled; that all things there were ready to serve him—the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,—seeing that at Christ's bidding one of the latter was to be ready to grasp at Peter's hook, and on being taken up was to have in its mouth the stater, the four-drachm piece, the very sum required from two persons for the yearly Temple tax? It is as viewed in this connexion that a miracle which otherwise would look needless and undignified—out of keeping with the general character of our Lord's great works, all of which in some way have something more than mere exhibiting of power—takes rank with all the rest as illustrative of the higher character and office of the Redeemer. It was not want which forced our Lord upon this forth-putting of his divinity.

Even had the bag which Judas carried been for the moment empty, the sum required to meet this payment was not so large but that it could easily have been otherwise procured; but in the manner in which the need was met Jesus would set forth that character on the ground of which he might have claimed immunity,—throwing over the depths of his earthly poverty the glory of his divine riches, and making it manifest how easy it had been for him to have laid all nature under contribution to supply all his wants. Yet another purpose was served by this incident in our Saviour's life. In point of time it harmonizes with the first occasions on which Jesus began to speak of that Church, that separate society which was to spring forth out of the bosom of Judaism, and to take the place of the old theocracy. Had he, without explanation made, at once ratified the engagement that Peter made for him, it might have been interpreted as an acknowledgment of his subjection to the customs and laws of the old covenant. That no offence might be taken—taken in ignorance by those who were ignorant of the ground upon which

immunity from this payment on his part might have been asserted—he was willing to do as Peter said he would. In this it became him to fulfil all the righteousness of the law, but even in doing so he will utter in private his protest, and in the mode wherein that protest is embodied convey beforehand no indistinct intimation that a breach was to take place between the Temple service and the new community of the free of which he was to be the Head.

It is extremely difficult to determine what the exact order of events was on the arrival at Capernaum. If it were while they were on the way to the house—most likely that of Peter, in which Jesus took up his abode—that the collectors of the Temple tax made their application, then the first incident after the arrival would be the short conversation with Simon, and the despatching him to obtain the stater from the fish's mouth upon the lake. In Peter's absence, and after they had entered the house, Jesus may have said to his disciples, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" They were so struck by surprise, had been so certain that

their Master had not overheard the dispute that had taken place, that they had no answer to give to his inquiry. Meanwhile, Peter has returned from his errand, and reported its result, while they in turn report to him the inquiry that had been made of them. Let us remember here that up to the time of the arrival in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea-Philippi, no instance is on record of any controversy having arisen among the personal attendants on Christ as to the different positions they were to occupy in his kingdom. All had hitherto been so vague and indefinite as to the time and manner of the institution of the kingdom, that all conjecture or anticipation as to their relative places therein had been kept in abeyance. Now, however, they see a new tone and manner in their Master. He speaks of things—they do not well know what—which are about to occur in Jerusalem. He tells them that there were some of them standing there before him which should not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God. Which of them could it be for whom such honour was in reserve? He takes Peter and James and

John up with him to the mount, and appears there before them in so new an aspect, invested with such a strange and exceeding glory, that the privilege of being present at such a spectacle must have appeared to the three as a singular distinction conferred upon them. They were not to tell the others what they had seen, but they could scarcely fail to tell them they had seen something wonderful beyond anything that had happened in their Lord's wonderful life, which they were not permitted to reveal. Would not the seal of secrecy so imposed enhance in their estimation the privilege which had been conferred on them, and would it not in the same degree be apt to awaken a jealousy on the part of the nine? At the very time, then, that they all began to look out for the coming of the kingdom as near at hand, by the materials thus supplied for pride with some, for envy with the rest, an apple of discord was thrown in among the twelve. They were but men of like passions with ourselves. They had as yet no other notion of the kingdom that was shortly to appear than that it would be a temporal one;

that their Master was to become a powerful and victorious prince, with places, honours, wealth, at his command. And what more natural than that they whom he had chosen to be confidential attendants in the days of his humiliation should be then signally exalted and rewarded? Such being their common expectations, any mark of partiality on Christ's part would be particularly noted; and what more natural than that such a signal one as that bestowed upon the three, in their being chosen as the only witnesses of the Transfiguration, should have stirred up the strife by the way as to who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

This first outbreak of selfishness and pride and ambition and envy and strife, among his chosen companions, was a great occasion in the sight of Jesus. It might and it did spring in a large extent from ignorance, and, with the removal of that ignorance, might be subdued; but it might and it did spring from sources which, after fullest knowledge had been conveyed of what the kingdom was and wherein *its* distinctions lay, might still have power to flood the

Church with a whole host of evils. Therefore it was that Jesus would signalize this occasion by words and an act of particular impressiveness. Peter had returned from the lake-side with the stater in his hand to pay for himself and for Jesus. The others told him of the questions that had been put to them, and of the silence they had observed. As they do so, this new instance of Peter's selection for a separate service stirs the embers of their former strife, and in their curiosity and impatience one of them is bold enough to say to Jesus, "Who is or shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus sits down, calls the twelve that they might be all around him, and says to them,—"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last." 'If any man, actuated by selfish, covetous, ambitious motives, seek to be first in my kingdom, he shall be last—the very efforts that he shall make to climb to the highest elevation there being of their very nature such as shall plunge him to the lowest depths. But if any man would be first within that kingdom, first in goodness, first in usefulness, first in honour there, let him be last, willing to be the

servant of others, ready to esteem others better than himself, prepared to take any place, to make any sacrifice, to render any service, provided only that others' welfare be thereby advanced. In humbling himself so, that man shall be exalted. I give to this great truth a visible and memorable representation.' Jesus called a little child to him, set him in the midst, then took him into his arms, and said,—"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." 'Ye are fighting about places, power, pre-eminence in my kingdom; but I tell you that the selfishness, the pride, the ambition, out of which all such strife emerges, are so wholly alien from the nature of that kingdom which I have come to introduce and establish, that unless you be changed in spirit, and become meek, humble, teachable, submissive as this little child which I now hold so gently in my arms, ye cannot enter into that kingdom, much less rise to places of distinction there. You wish to know who shall be greatest in that kingdom. It shall not be the wisest, the wealthiest, the most power-

ful, but whosoever shall most humble himself, and in humility be likest to this little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' 'If that be true,' we can fancy the apostles thinking and saying, 'if all personal distinction and pre-eminence must be renounced by us, if in seeking to be first we must be last, and each be the servant of all the others, what then will become of our official influence and authority—who will receive and obey us as thy representatives?' Our Lord's reply is this—'Your true and best reception as my ambassadors does not depend upon the external rank you hold, or the official authority with which you may be clothed. It depends upon your own personal qualities as humble, loving, devoted followers of me. This is true of you and of all; for whosoever receiveth one such little child—one of these little ones which believe in me, in my name—receiveth me; and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me but him that sent me.'

This new idea about receiving the least of Christ's little ones in Christ's name, awakens in the breast of one of his auditors a troubling remembrance. John recollects that he and some

others of the disciples had once seen a man casting out devils in the name of Christ, and that they had forbidden him to do so, because, as they thought, he had no authority to do so, had received no commission, was not even openly a follower of Jesus. Somewhat in doubt now, after what he has heard, as to whether they had been right in doing so, he states the case to Jesus, and gets at once the distinct and emphatic "Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me." John had judged this man rashly and severely, had counted him guilty of presumption in attempting, whilst standing outside the circle of Christ's acknowledged friends and followers, to do anything in his name; had doubted or disbelieved that he was a disciple of or a believer in Jesus. Full of the spirit of officialism, in the pride of his order as one of the selected twelve, to whom alone, as he imagined, the power of working miracles in Christ's name had been committed, John had interfered to arrest his procedure,—acting thus as the young man and as Joshua did, of whom we read in the Book of

Numbers, "And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them." But Moses, in the very spirit of Christ, said, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"[1] "Forbid him not," said Jesus. 'His doing a miracle in my name is a far better evidence of his cherishing a real trust in me, being one of mine, than any external position or official rank that he could occupy. Be not hasty in deciding as to who are and who are not my genuine disciples; for while that is true which I taught you when I was speaking of those who alleged that I cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, that "he that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad,"[2] it is no less true that "he that is not against us is on our part."' Neither of the two sayings, indeed, can be universally and unlimitedly applied; but there are circumstances in which

[1] Numbers xi. 27, 29 [2] Matt. xii. 30.

absence of open hostility may of itself be taken as evidence of friendship; and there are circumstances in which absence of open friendship may of itself be taken as evidence of hostility. Instead of overlooking, as they had done, such a strong conclusive evidence as that of working miracles in Christ's name, John and the others should have been ready, as their Master was, to recognise the slightest token of attachment. "For whosoever," added Jesus, "shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward."

"The beginning of strife," the wise man said, "is as when one letteth out water." And that beginning of strife among the apostles of Christ as to which of them should be greatest, what a first letting out was it of those bitter waters of contention, envy, and all uncharitableness, which the centuries since Christ's time have seen flooding the Church—its members struggling for such honours and emoluments, or, when these were but scanty, for such authority and influence as ecclesiastical offices and positions could confer!

Slow, indeed, has that society which bears his name been of learning the lesson which, first in precept, and then in his own exalted example, the Saviour left behind him, that "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

We have had before us the first of the two instances in which John was led away by a fiery and intemperate zeal—in this instance, to misjudge and condemn one who, though he had not faith nor fortitude enough to leave all and follow Jesus, yet had faith enough to enable him to work miracles in Christ's name. It is not told us how John took the check which Jesus laid upon that spirit of officialism and fanaticism which had been working in his breast. But we do know how thoroughly that spirit was at last subdued in the heart of the meekest and most loving of the twelve, and how he moved afterward through his fellow-men with step of Christ-like gentleness, and became "the guardian spirit of the little ones of the kingdom."

III.

CHRIST AND HIS BRETHREN.[1]

We like to follow those who by their sayings and doings have filled and dazzled the public eye into the seclusion of their homes. We like to see such men in their undress, when, all restraint removed, their peculiarities of character are free to exhibit themselves in the countless artless ways and manners of daily domestic life. It brings them so much nearer to us, gives us a closer hold of them, makes us feel more vividly their kinship to us, to know how they did the things that we have all every day to do, how they comported themselves in the circumstances in which we all every day are placed. Great pains have been taken by biographers of distinguished men to gratify this desire. Quite apart, indeed,

[1] John vii. 1-9.

from any object of this kind, we could scarcely sit down to write out an account of what we saw and heard in the course of two or three years' close intercourse with a friend, without dropping many a hint as to the minor modes and habits of his life.

Is there nothing remarkable in the entire absence of anything of this kind in the narrative of the four Evangelists? Engrossed with what they tell us, we think not of what they have left untold; think not, for example, that they have left no materials for gratifying the desire that we have spoken of—one so natural and so strong. It is as if in writing these narratives a strong bias of our nature had been put under restraint. They say not a word about the personal appearance of their Master; there is nothing for the painter or sculptor to seize on. They give us no details of his private and personal habits, of any peculiarities of look or speech or gesture, of the times or ways of his doing this thing or that. St. Mark, the most graphic describer of the four, tells us once or twice of a particular look or motion of our Lord, but not so as to indicate

anything distinctive in their manner. Why this silence? Why thus withhold from us all means of forming a vivid conception of the Redeemer's personal appearance, and of following him through the details of his more familiar daily intercourse with the twelve? Was it that the materials were wanting, that there were no personal peculiarities about Jesus Christ, that inwardly and outwardly all was so nicely balanced, all was in such perfect harmony and proportion, that as in his human intellect and human character, there was nothing to distinguish him individually from his fellow-men, —nothing, I mean, of that kind by which all the individual intellects and characters are each specially characterized,—so even in the minor habits of his life there was nothing distinctive to be recorded? Or was it that the veil has been purposely drawn over all such materials, to check all that superstitious worship of the senses which might have gathered round minute pictures of our Lord in the acts and habits of his daily life? If even as it is, the passion for such worship has made the food for itself to feed upon, and, living upon that food, has swelled out into such large

proportions, what should it have been if such food had from the first been provided? Is it not well that the image of our Lord in his earthly life, while having the print of our humanity so clearly and fully impressed upon it, should yet be lifted up and kept apart, and all done that could be done to keep it from being sullied by such rude, familiar, irreverent regard?

What is true of our Lord's habits generally, is true of his religious habits,—of the time and manner in which religious duties were performed. We know something of the manner in which these duties were discharged by a truly devout Jew of Christ's age, of the daily washings before meals, and the frequent fastings, and the repeated and long prayers, of the attendance at the synagogue, and the regular going up to the great feasts at Jerusalem. Some of these Jesus appears to have neglected. The scribes and the Pharisees came to him, saying, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread."[1] Again they came to him with another similar

[1] Matt. xv. 2.

complaint, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but thine eat and drink?" These charges are brought nominally against the disciples, who only followed the example of their Master. He neglected the ordinary ablutions to which in Jewish eyes a sacred character attached. He himself did not fast, and he taught his disciples that when they did so it was to be in such a manner that men might not know that they were fasting. Of the times and the manner in which our Lord's private devotions were conducted, how little is revealed! You read of his rising up a great while before day, and retiring into a solitary place to pray.[1] You read of his sending the multitude away and going up into a mountain to pray; of his continuing all night in prayer.[2] You read of special acts of devotion connected with his baptism, his transfiguration, his agony in the garden, his suffering on the cross. We know that it was by him, and him alone, of all the children of

[1] Mark i. 35.

[2] Matt. xiv. 23; Luke vi. 12.

men, that the precept "pray without ceasing" was fully and perfectly kept—kept by its being in the spirit of prayer that his whole life was spent, —but when we ask what Christ's daily habit was, how often each day did he engage in specific acts of devotion, and how, when he did so, were these acts performed—did he retire each morning and evening from his disciples to engage in prayer? did he daily, morning and evening, pray with and for his disciples?—the Evangelists leave us without an answer. The single thing they tell us, and it conveys but little precise information, is, that "it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."[1] This took place during the last six months of our Lord's ministry. It looks as if the disciples had come upon their Master when engaged in his solitary devotions, and had been so struck with what they saw and heard, that one of them, when the prayer was over, could not help asking him to teach them to pray. Remembering that this happened at so late

[1] Luke xi. 1.

a period in their intercourse with him, does it not seem as if Jesus had not been in the habit of daily leading their devotions? The very difficulty that we feel in understanding how at such a time such a question came to be put to him, shows us what a blank there is here in the evangelic narrative, and how ignorant we must be content to remain.

If the generally accepted chronology of our Lord's life be the true one—and we see no reason to reject it—we are *not* left in such ignorance as to how another of the religious duties practised at the time by those around him was discharged by Christ. His ministry in Galilee lasted eighteen months. During this period four of the great annual religious festivals which the Jews were enjoined to attend had taken place at Jerusalem—two Pentecosts, one Passover, and one Feast of Tabernacles,—at none of which Jesus appeared. There was indeed a reason for his absence, grounded on the state of feeling against him existing in Jerusalem, and the resolution already taken by the Jewish leaders there to cut him off by death. Till his work in

Galilee was completed he would not place himself in the circumstances which would inevitably lead on to that doom being executed. But who of all around him knew of that or any other good or sufficient reason for his absenting himself from these sacred festivals? And to them what a perplexing fact must that absence have appeared! Altogether, when you take the entire attitude, bearing, and conduct of Jesus Christ as to their ablutions, their fastings, their prayers, their keeping of the Sabbath, their attendance at the feasts, it is not difficult to imagine what an inexplicable mystery he must have been to the great majority of his countrymen. I do not speak now of the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, of whom his teaching and his life was one continued rebuke, and who hated him with a deadly hatred from the first, but of the many sincerely devout, superstitiously religious Jews amongst whom he lived. What a perfect puzzle to such the character and career of this man Christ Jesus—one speaking so much and in such a way of God and of godliness, proclaiming the advent of

God's own kingdom on the earth, unfolding its duties, its privileges, its blessednesses, yet to their seeming so neglectful, so undevout, so irreligious! We may not be able now thoroughly to put ourselves in these men's position—thoroughly to understand with what kind of eyes it was that they looked upon that wonderful spectacle which the life of Jesus pressed upon their vision; but we should be capable of discerning the singular and emphatic protest which that life was ever raising against all mere formal piety, the piety of times and seasons and ordinances, the religion of rule and of routine.

But let us now rejoin our Lord. He is once more at Capernaum, or in its neighbourhood. A year and a half has elapsed since he joined the bands in company with whom he had gone up to Jerusalem to keep the second Passover after his baptism. It is autumn, and all around are busy in preparing for their journey to the capital to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. But he exhibits no intention to accompany them. He is going apparently to treat

this festival as he had done the four which preceded it. What others thought of his behaviour in this respect we are left to conjecture. His brethren, however—those who were either his actual brothers or his cousins—the members of that household in which he had been brought up—could not let the opportunity pass without telling him what they thought of his conduct. He and they had latterly been separated. They did not believe in him. They did not rank themselves among his disciples. Yet uninterested spectators of what had been going on in Galilee they could not remain. Now that Joseph was dead, he was the head of their family, and they could not but feel that their position and prospects were in some way linked with his. Somewhat proud they could not but be that he had excited such great attention, done such wonderful works, drawn after him such vast crowds. At first, with all their incredulity, they were half inclined to hope that some great future was in store for him. One who spake so highly and with such authority as he did, who claimed and

exercised such power, what might he not be and do in a community so peculiarly placed, so singularly excitable as the Jewish one then was? He might even prove to be the Messiah, the great princely leader of the people, for whom so many were waiting. Against that was the whole style and character of his teaching—in which, instead of there being anything addressed to the social or political condition of the people, anything fitted to stir up the spirit of Jewish pride and independence, there was everything calculated to soothe and subdue—to lead the thoughts and hopes of the people in quite other than earthly channels. Against it, too, there was the fact, becoming more apparent as the months ran on, that the natural leaders of the community—the scribes and Pharisees—by and through whom it could only be that any great civil emancipation could be effected, were uniting against him in a bond of firmer and fiercer hostility. Even the crowds of the common people, which had at first surrounded him, were latterly declining, offended at the way in which he was beginning to speak of himself—telling them that except they ate his

flesh and drank his blood they had no life in them. Emboldened by all this to use the old familiarity to which in other days they had been accustomed, his brethren come to him and say, "Depart hence and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly: if thou do these things, shew thyself to the world." Imputing to him the common motives by which all worldly, selfish, ambitious men are animated, they taunt him with weakness and folly. Who that possessed such powers as he did would be satisfied with turning them to such poor account? If he were what he seemed, was he to hide himself for ever among these hills of Galilee, and not go up boldly to the capital, and wrest from the rulers the acknowledgment of his claims? It was but a pitiful success to draw after him some thousands of a gaping multitude, who followed him because they ate of the bread that he furnished and were filled—all whose faith in him was exhausted in wondering at him as the worker of such miracles. Let him, if he

had the spirit of a true courage in him—if he was fit to take the leadership of the people—let him aim at once at far higher game, place himself at once in the centre of influence at Jerusalem, and show himself to the world. Then if on that broad theatre he made his pretensions good, it would be some honour to claim connexion with him, some benefit to be enrolled as his followers.

How true is all this to that spirit of a mere earthly prudence and policy by which the lives of multitudes are regulated! Christ's own brothers judge of him by themselves. They cannot conceive but that he must desire to make the most for his own benefit and aggrandizement of whatever gifts he possessed. They count it to be weak in him, or worse, that he will not do the most he can in this way and for this end. They measure all by outward and visible success. And if success of that kind be not realized, all the chances and opportunities that are open to him they regard as thrown away and lost. In speaking thus to Jesus they sever themselves by a wide interval from their great relative. He was not of this world. Unselfish, unworldly were all

his motives, aims, and ends. They are of the world, and true children of the world they are, in thus addressing him, proving themselves to be. And this they must be told at least, if they will not effectually be taught. It was in a tone of assumed superiority that they had spoken to him when they prescribed the course he should pursue. How far above them does he rise, as from that altitude whose very height hid it from their eyes, he calmly yet solemnly rolls back on them their rebuke—"My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto the feast. I go not up yet unto the feast, for my time is not yet full come." They would have him seize upon the opportunity of the approaching feast to show himself to the world, to win the world's favour and applause. This was their notion of human life. The stage upon which men play their parts here was in their eyes but as a mixed array of changes and chances upon which the keen eye of selfishness should be always fixed,

ready to grasp and make the most of them for purposes of personal aggrandizement. For such as they were the time was always ready. They had no other reckoning to make—no other star to steer by—than simply to discern when and how their selfish interests could be best promoted, and what their hands thus found to do, to do it with all their might. The world could not hate them, for they were of the world, and the world loveth its own. Let them court its favour, let them seek its pleasures, its honours, its profits, and the world would be pleased with the homage that was offered it, and if they but succeeded, they might count upon its applause, for men would praise them when they did well for themselves.[1] It was not so with Jesus, but utterly and diametrically the reverse. His was no life either of random impulses, of fitful accident, or of regulated self-seeking. The world he lived in was to him no antechamber, with doors of aggrandizement here and there around, for whose opening he was greedily to watch, that he might go in speedily and seize the prizes that lay beyond, before others

[1] Psalm xlix. 18.

grasped them. It was the place into which the Father had sent him to do there that Father's business, to finish the work there given him to do. And in the doing of that work there is to be no heat, no hurry, no impatience with him. The time, the hour for each act and deed was already settled in the purposes and ordinances of the Father. And the Father's time, the Father's hour were his, for which he was always ready calmly and patiently to wait. The world's hatred he counted on—he was prepared for. He knew what awaited him at Jerusalem. He knew what the hatred cherished against him there would finally and ere long effect; but he must not prematurely expose himself to it, nor suffer it to hasten by a single day the great decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. His time was coming—the time of his manifestation to Israel—of his showing forth to the world—a very different kind of manifestation from that of which his brethren were dreaming. But it was not yet fully come, and therefore he did not mean to go up to Jerusalem and openly to take part from the beginning as one of its celebrators in this approaching Feast of

Tabernacles. This, in ways which we can easily conjecture, but are not at liberty dogmatically to assert, would have interfered with the orderly evolution of the great event in which his earthly ministry was to close. But the time was fixed—that feast was drawing on—when his hour would come, and then it would be seen how the Son would glorify the Father and the Father be glorified in the Son.

And now let us remember that the sharp and vivid contrast drawn here by our Saviour's own truthful hand—between himself and his brethren according to the flesh—is the very same that he has taught us to draw between all his true disciples and the world. Let us listen to the description he gave of his own in that sublime intercessory prayer offered up on the eve of his agony, in that supper chamber in which the first communion was celebrated: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The Father did not need to know for whom his Son was then interceding. The Father did not need to have any description of their

character given to him. Yet twice in that prayer did Jesus say of his true followers thus: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." To know and feel and act as he did; under the deep abiding impression that, low as our lives are compared with his—small and insignificant as the ends are that any of us can accomplish—yet that our times, our ways, our doings, are all ordered by heavenly wisdom for heavenly ends; that the tangled threads of our destiny are held by a Father's hand, to be woven into such patterns as to him seems best; by the cross of our Redeemer —by the redemption that was by it wrought out for us—by the great example of self-sacrifice that was in it exhibited—by the love of him who died that we might live, to have the world crucified unto us, and we crucified to the world;—to have the same mind in us that was in him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, who, though he was so rich, for our sakes became so poor, that we through his poverty might be rich: —this would be to realize the description that our Lord has left behind him of what all his true

disciples ought to be, and in some measure are. As we take up and apply the test it supplies, how deeply may we all humble ourselves before him—under the consciousness of how slightly, how partially, if at all, the description is true of us!

IV.

CHRIST AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.[1]

GREAT national benefits, civil, social, and religious, were conferred upon the Jews by the ordinance that three times each year the whole adult population of the country should assemble at Jerusalem. The finest seasons of the year, spring and autumn, were fixed on for these gatherings of the people. The journeyings at such seasons of friends and neighbours, in bands of happy fellowship, must have been healthful and exhilarating. Separated as it was into clans or tribes, the frequent reunion of the entire community must have served to counteract and subdue any jealousies or divisions that might otherwise have arisen. The meeting together as children of a common progenitor, living under the same laws, heirs of the same promises, wor-

[1] John vii. 11-52.

shippers of the same God, must not only have cultivated the spirit of brotherhood and nationality, but have strengthened their faith and guarded from the encroachments of idolatry the worship of the country. Among the lesser advantages that these periodic assemblages brought along with them, they afforded admirable opportunities for the expression and interchange of the sentiments of the people on every subject that particularly interested them: what in our times the press and public meetings do, they did for the Jews. So far as we know, no nation of antiquity had such full and frequent means of testing and indicating the state of public feeling. Whatever topic had been engrossing the thoughts of the community, would be sure to be the subject of general conversation in the capital the next time that the tribes assembled in Jerusalem. Remembering how fickle public feeling is, how difficult it is to fix it and keep it concentrated upon one subject for any considerable period, we may be certain that it was a subject singularly interesting—one which had taken a general and very strong hold of the public mind, that for a

year and a half, during five successive festivals, came up ever fresh upon the lips of the congregated thousands.

Yet it was so as to the appearance among them of Jesus Christ. Eighteen months had passed since he had been seen in Jerusalem, yet no sooner has the Feast of Tabernacles commenced than the Jews look everywhere around for him, and say, "Where is he?" The absence of one man among so many thousands might, we should think, have passed by unnoticed. The absence of this man is the subject of general remark. The people generally speak of him with bated breath, for it is well enough known that he is no favourite with the great men of the capital, and as they speak great discord of opinion prevails. It gives us, however, a very good idea of the extent and strength of the impression he had made upon the entire population of the country, that at this great annual gathering, and after so long an absence, he is instantly the object of search, and so generally the subject of conversation. Even while they were thus speaking of him he was on his way to Jerusalem. Travelling alone, or but

slenderly escorted, and choosing an unfrequented route, so that no pre-intimation of his approach might reach the city, he arrives about the middle of the feast, and throws off at once all attempt at concealment. Passing, as we might think, from the extreme of caution to the extreme of daring, he plants himself among the crowd in the Temple courts, and addresses them as one only of the oldest and most learned of the Rabbis might have ventured to do. Some of the rulers are there, but the suddenness of his appearance, the boldness of the step he takes, the manner of his speech, make them for the time forget their purpose. They can't but listen like the rest, but they won't give heed to the things about the divine kingdom that he is proclaiming. What strikes them most, and excites their wonder, is that he speaks so well, quotes the Scriptures, and shows himself so accurately acquainted with the law. "How knoweth this man letters," they say of him, "having never learned?" They would turn the thoughts of the people from what Jesus was saying to the consideration of his title and qualification to address them so. Who is this?

in what school was he trained? at the feet of which of our great Rabbis did he sit? by what authority does he assume this office? Questions very natural for men full of all the proud and exclusive spirit of officialism to put; questions, by the very putting of which they would lower him in the estimation of the multitude, and try to strip his teaching of its power. They give to Jesus the opportunity of declaring, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." 'I am not addressing you either as a self-taught man, or one brought up in any of your schools. I am not addressing to you truths that I was taught by others, or have myself elaborated. Think not of me, who or what I am; think of what I teach, receive it as coming, not from me, but from him who sent me. You ask about my credentials; you would like to know what right I have to become a teacher of the people. There is a far simpler and better way of coming to a just conclusion about my teaching than the one that you are pointing to, and, happily, it is one that lies open unto all. If any man is truly willing to do the divine will; if he wants to know what that

will is in order that he may do it; if that, in listening to my teaching, be his simple, earnest aim, he shall know of the doctrine that I am teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. No amount of native talent, no extent of school learning of any kind, will compensate for the want of a pure and honest purpose. But if such a purpose be cherished, you shall see its end gained; if your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light.' And still the saying of our Lord holds good, that in the search of truth, in the preserving us from error, in the guiding of us to right judgments about himself and his doctrine, the heart has more to do with the matter than the head—the willingness to do telling upon the capacity to know and to believe. Jesus asks that he himself be judged by this principle and upon this rule. What, in teaching, was his aim? Was it to display his talent, to win a reputation, to have his ideas adopted as being his?—was it to please himself, to show forth his own glory? How boldly does he challenge these critical observers to detect in him any symptom of self-seeking! With what

a serene consciousness of the entire absence in himself of that element from which no other human heart was ever wholly free, does he say of himself, "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him."

So much is said by Jesus to encourage all truly desirous to know about him; so much to vindicate himself against the adverse judgment of the rulers; but how does all this apply to them? Have they the willingness to do? have they the purity and the unselfishness of purpose? This feast of tabernacles was the one peculiarly associated with the reading of the law. "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law."[1] It is in presence of the

[1] Deut. xxxi. 10-12.

very men whose duty it was to carry out this ordinance, that Jesus is now standing. From the first they hated him, and from the time, now eighteen months ago, that he had cured the paralytic, breaking, as they thought, the Sabbath, and said that God was his father, making himself equal with God, they had resolved to kill him. This was the way—by cherishing hatred and the secret intent to murder—that they were dealing with the law. Rolling their adverse judgment of him back upon themselves, and dragging out to light the purpose that in the meantime they would have kept concealed, Jesus said, "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?" Those to whom that question is more immediately addressed have no answer to give to it; but in the crowd are those who, ignorant of the plot against the life of Jesus, yet sharing in the rulers' contempt and hatred, say to him, "Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?" Christ stops not to deal with such a speech, but takes up at once what had furnished so painful a weapon in the hands of the Pharisees against him. He refers

to that one deed still fresh in the minds of all those in Jerusalem. The offence of that one act of his in curing the impotent man on a Sabbath-day, had been made to overshadow all his other acts, to overbear all his other claims to attention and regard. "I have done one work," he said, "and ye all marvel," as if I had thereby plainly proved myself a breaker of the Sabbath law. Formerly, before the Sanhedrim, he had defended himself against this charge of Sabbath-breaking by other and higher arguments. Now addressing, as he does, the common people, he takes an instance familiar to them all. The Sabbath law run thus: "Thou shalt do no work on the seventh day." How was this law to be interpreted? If the circumcision of a man on the seventh day was not a breach of it,—and no one thought it was,—what was to be said of the healing of a man upon that day? If ye on the Sabbath circumcise a man, and the law of Moses is not broken, why "are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day?" The analogy was so perfect, and the question so plain, that no

reply was attempted. In the temporary silence that ensues, some of the citizens of Jerusalem who were aware of the secret resolution of the Sanhedrim, struck with wonder at what they now see and hear, cannot help saying, "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" We might imagine the words to have come from those who were ready themselves to see the very Christ in Jesus, but though they share not their rulers' persecuting spirit, these men have a prejudice of their own. It had come to be a very general opinion about this time in Judea, that the Messiah was to have no common human origin, no father or mother, was to be raised from the dead beneath, or to come as an angel from the heavens. His not meeting this requirement is enough with these men to set aside the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. "Howbeit," they say, as men quite satisfied with the sureness of the ground on which they go, "Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

Then *cried* Jesus in the temple as he taught,"—such an easy and self-satisfied way of disposing of the whole question of his Messiahship, causing him to lift up his voice in loud and strenuous protest,—"Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me." The old and oft-repeated truth of his mission from the Father, coupled now with such a strong assertion of his own knowledge and of these men's ignorance of who his Father was, that they are so irritated as to be disposed to proceed to violence; but upon them, as upon the rulers, there is a restraint: "No man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come."

So impressed in his favour have many of the onlookers now become, that they are bold enough to say, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" As Jesus had done no miracles at this time in Jerusalem, the speakers obviously refer to what he had elsewhere wrought. Their speech is immediately reported to the Pharisees and Chief

Priests sitting in council in an adjacent court of the Temple, who, so soon as they hear that the people are beginning to speak openly in his favour, send officers to take him. With obvious allusion to the errand on which these men come, as if to tell them how secure he felt, how sure he was that his comings and his goings in the future would be all of his own free will,—Jesus says, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go to him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come;" words very plain to us, but very dark to those who have no other interpretation to put upon them but that he may mean perhaps to leave Judea and go to the dispersed among the Gentiles. Little, however, as they were understood, there was such a tone of quiet, yet sad assurance about them, that the high priests' officers are arrested, and return to give this to their employers as the reason why they had not executed the order given them, "Never man spake like this man."

So ended our Lord's first day of teaching in the Temple, a day revealing on his part a wisdom, a

courage, a serene, sublime, untroubled trust which took his adversaries by surprise, and held all their deadly purposes against him in suspense—and on the part of the multitude the strangest mixture of conflicting opinions and sentiments, with which our Lord so dealt as to win exemption from like interruptions afterwards, and to secure for himself an unbroken audience on the day when his last and greatest words were spoken.

The Feast of Tabernacles was instituted to commemorate the time when the Israelites had dwelt in tents during their sojourn in the desert. To bring the remembrance of those long years of tent-life more vividly before them, the people were enjoined, during the seven days that it lasted, to leave their accustomed homes, and to dwell in booths or huts made of gathered branches of the palm, the pine, the myrtle, or other trees of a like thick foliage. It must have been a strange spectacle when, on the day before the feast, the inhabitants of Jerusalem poured out from their dwellings, spread themselves over the neighbourhood, stripped the groves of their leafiest branches, brought them back to rear them into

booths upon the tops of their houses, along the leading streets, and in some of the outer courts of the Temple. The dull, square, stony aspect of the city suffered a singular metamorphosis as these leafy structures met everywhere the eye. It was the great Jewish harvest-home—for this feast was celebrated in autumn, after all the fruits of the earth had been gathered in. It was within the Temple that its joyous or thanksgiving character especially developed itself. Morning and evening, day by day, during sacrifices more crowded than those of any other of the great festivals, the air was rent with the praises of the rejoicing multitudes. At the time of the libation of water, the voice of their glad thanksgiving swelled up into its fullest and most jubilant expression. Each morning a vast procession formed itself around the little fountain of Siloam down in the valley of the Kedron. Out of its flowing waters the priests filled a large golden pitcher. Bearing it aloft, they climbed the steep ascent of Moriah, passed through the water-gate, up the broad stairs, and into the court of the Temple, in whose centre the altar stood. Before this altar

two silver basins were planted, with holes beneath to let the liquid poured into them flow down into the subterranean reservoir beneath the Temple, to run out thence into the Kedron, and down into the Dead Sea. One priest stood and poured the water he had brought up from Siloam into one of these basins. Another poured the contents of a like pitcher filled with wine into the other. As they did so the vast assemblage broke out into the most exulting exclamations of joy. The trumpets of the Temple sounded. In voice and upon instrument the trained choristers put forth all their skill and power. Led by them, many thousand voices chanted the Great Hallel (the Psalms from the 113th to the 118th), pausing at the verses on which the chief emphasis was placed to wave triumphantly in the air the branches that they all bore, and make the welkin ring with their rejoicing. This was the happiest service in all the yearly ceremonial of Judaism. "He," said the old Jewish proverb, "who has never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the waters of Siloam—has never seen rejoicing all his life." All this rejoicing was connected with that pictur-

esque proceeding by which the Lord's providing water for his people in their desert wanderings was symbolized and commemorated. And few, if any, have doubted that it was with direct allusion to this daily pouring out of the waters of Siloam, which was so striking a feature of the festival, that on the last, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." 'Your forefathers thirsted in the wilderness, and I smote the rock for them, so that the waters flowed forth. I made a way for them in the wilderness, and gave rivers in the desert to give drink to my people—my chosen. But of what was that thirst of theirs, and the manner in which I met it, an emblem? Did not Isaiah tell you, when in my name he spake, saying, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the

valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water?" And now I am here to fulfil in person all the promises that I made by the lips of my servant Isaiah, and I gather them up and condense them in the invitation—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."'

"If any man thirst!" Ah! the Saviour knew it of these rejoicing Israelites, that glad and grateful as they were for the land that they had entered into out of the wilderness—no dry and thirsty land, but one of springs and of rivers, of the early and the latter rain—there was a thirst that none of its fountains could quench, a hunger that none of its fruitage could satisfy. And he knows it of us, and of all men, that a like deep inward thirst dries up our spirit, a like deep inward hunger is ever gnawing at our heart. Are there no desires, and longings, and aspirations in these souls of ours that nothing earthly can meet and satisfy? Not money, not honour, not power, not pleasure, not anything nor everything this world holds out —they do not, cannot fill our hearts—they do not, cannot quench that thirst that burns within.

Can any one tell us where we may carry this great thirst and get it fully quenched? From the lips of the man Christ Jesus the answer comes. He speaks to the crowds in the Temple of Jerusalem, but his words are not for them alone—they have been given to the broad heavens, to be borne wide over all the earth, and down through all its generations: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Thirsty we know we are, and thirsty shall remain till we hear these gracious words, and hearing come, and coming drink, and drinking get the want supplied. Yes, we believe —Lord, help our unbelief—that there is safety, peace, rest, refreshment, joy for these weary aching hearts in Thee—the well-spring of our eternal life.

"He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters." Below the spot on which Jesus stood when speaking in the courts of the Temple, there lay vast subterranean vaults, whose singular recesses have only recently been explored. Descending into them, you get a glimpse, by help of dimly burning tapers, of a vast cistern below the site of the ancient temple. Whether this large reservoir

be filled wholly from without, or has a spring of living waters supplying it from below, remains to be ascertained. Enough, however, has been discovered to stamp with truth the ancient Jewish stories about the great cistern, "whose compass was as the sea," and about the unfailing waters of the Temple. Nor can we any longer doubt that it was to these subterranean supplies of water that the prophet Joel alluded when he said, "It shall come to pass in that day that a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim;" that the prophet Zechariah alluded to when he said, "It shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them turned toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder;" that still more pointedly the prophet Ezekiel alluded to when he said, "Afterward he brought me again into the door of the house, and behold waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar." And as little can we doubt that Jesus had these very scriptures in his

thoughts and that cavity beneath his feet in his eye when he said, "He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters." 'He that believeth shall not barely and alone have his own thirst assuaged, but I in him, by my Spirit given, moulding him into my own likeness, shall turn him into a separate well-head, from whose depths rivers of living water shall flow forth to visit, gladden, fructify some lesser or larger portion of the arid waste around.' Let us know and remember then, that Jesus, the divine assuager of the thirst of human hearts, imparts the blessing to each who comes to him, that he may go and impart the blessing to others. He comforts us with a sense of his presence, guidance, protection, sympathy, that we may go and console others with that same comfort wherewith we have been comforted of him. He never gives that we may selfishly hoard the treasure that we get. That treasure, like the bread that was broken for the thousands on the hill-side of Galilee, multiplies in the hand that takes it to divide and to distribute.

V.

JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.[1]

JESUS was in the Treasury. It stood at the north side of one of those large enclosures called the Court of the Women, which lay outside the Temple properly so called, and in which, on all the great annual festivals, crowds were wont daily to assemble. In the centre of this court, at the Feast of Tabernacles, two tall stands were placed, each supporting four large branching candelabra. As at the time of the morning sacrifice the procession wound its way up from the fountain of Siloam, and the water was poured out from the golden pitcher to remind the people of the supply of water that had been made for their forefathers during the desert wanderings; so after the evening sacrifice all the lights in these candelabra were kindled, the flame broad and brilliant enough

[1] John viii. 12-59.

to illuminate the whole city, to remind the people of the pillar of light by which their marchings through the wilderness were guided. And still freer and heartier than the morning jubilations which attended on the libation of the water, were the evening ones which accompanied the kindling of the lights. It was with allusion to the one ceremony that Jesus said, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." It was with allusion to the other, of which both he and those around him were reminded by the stately chandeliers which stood at the time before their eyes, that he said, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." In uttering both these sayings, Jesus placed himself in a singular and elevated relationship to the whole human family. In the one he invited the entire multitude of human thirsters to come to him to have their thirst assuaged. In the other he claimed to be the one central source of light and life to the whole world. Is it surprising that as they looked at him, and heard him speaking in this way, and thought of who and what, according to their

reckoning, he was, the Jews should have seen egotism and arrogance in his words? There was in truth the very utmost pitch of such arrogance and egotism in them, had the speaker been such as they deemed him, a man like themselves. But one of his very objects in speaking so was to convince them and us that he was not such—that he stood towards the human family in quite other relationship from that in which any single member of it could stand to all the rest—that besides his connexion with it he had another and higher connexion, that with his Father in heaven, which entitled him to speak and act in a way peculiar to himself. By word and deed, again and again repeated, Jesus had sought in vain to convey into the minds of these Jews an idea of how singular that connexion was. He tries now once again, and once again he fails. Instead of their asking 'Who is this that offers to quench all human thirst, and who proclaims himself to be the light of the world?' saying to themselves in reply, 'He must be more than human, he must be divine—for who but One could claim such a prerogative and power?' they listen only to find

something to object to, and, grasping greedily at what lay upon the very surface of the sayings, they say to him, "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true." Perhaps they had our Lord's own words on the occasion of the former visit to Jerusalem on their memory: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." He was speaking then of a solitary unsupported testimony, —a testimony imagined to be borne by himself, to himself, and for himself, as one seeking to advance his own interests, promote his own glory. Such a testimony, had he borne it, he had then said would be altogether untrustworthy. His answer now to those who would taunt him at once with egotism and inconsistency is, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go." 'Had I not known that I came forth from the Father, am going back to the Father, that I am here only as his representative and revealer,—did the consciousness of full, clear, constant union with him not fill my spirit,—I would not, could not speak as I now do. But I know the Father even as I am known by him; he works, and I work with

him; whatsoever things he doeth I do likewise. It is out of the depth of the consciousness of my union with him that I speak, and what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him, and however else are you to know what can alone be known by my revealing it if I do not speak of myself, or do not speak as he only can who stands in the relationship in which I do to the Father.

'But "ye cannot tell whence I come and whither I go." You never gave yourselves any trouble to find it out. You never opened mind or heart to the evidence that I laid before you. What early alienated you from me was that I came not accredited as you would have desired, submitted no proofs of my heavenly calling to you for your approval, made no obeisance to you on entering on my career, came not up here to seek instruction at your hands, asked not from you any liberty to act as a scribe, a teacher of the law—instead of this, claimed at once this Temple as my Father's house, condemned the way in which you were suffering its sacred precincts to be defiled, and have ever since, in all that

I have said and done, been lifting up a constant, loud, and strenuous protest against you and your ways. You sit now in judgment upon me—you condemn me. You say that I am bearing record of myself, and that my record is not true, but "ye judge after the flesh." You have allowed human prejudice, human passion, to fashion your judgment. I so judge no man. It was not to judge that I came into this world. I came not to condemn, but to save it. And yet if I judge, as in one sense I must, and am even now about to do, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me judge, as we do everything, together. Your own very law declares, "that the testimony of two men is true." I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.'

As if they wished this second witness to be produced, they say to him contemptuously, "Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father." 'You think that you know me, you pride yourselves in not being deceived in me as the poor ignorant multitude is—my earthly pedigree as believed in by you satisfies

you as to my character and claims. You can scarcely, after all that I have said, have failed to perceive whom I meant when I was speaking of my Father. Him, too, you think you know; you pride yourselves on your superior acquaintance with him; you present yourselves to the people as the wisest and best expounders of his will and law. But "ye neither know me nor my Father;" for to know the one is to know the other—to remain ignorant of the one is to remain ignorant of the other. It is your want of all true knowledge of me that keeps you from knowing God. It is the want of all true knowledge of God that keeps you from knowing me. Had you known me, you should have known him; had you known him, you should have known me.'

So fared it with our Lord's declaration that he was the light of the world as it was at first spoken in the Temple; so ended the first brief colloquy with the Jews to which its utterance gave birth. There was one, however, of its first hearers upon whom it made a very different impression from that it made on the rulers of the Jews, who treasured it up in his heart, who saw ever as his

Master's life evolved itself before him, more and more evidence of its truth, whose spirit was afterwards enlightened to take in a truer, larger idea of the place and function of his Lord in the spiritual kingdom than has ever, perhaps, been given to another of the children of men, who, on this account, was chosen of the Lord to set them forth in his Gospel and in his Epistles, and who has given to us this explanation of the words of his Master: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." John "came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace

and truth." "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (for the life was manifested), and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "This is the true God and eternal life." Such is the description John has left us of him who spiritually is the sun of this dark world, the central source of all its life and light. The life and light of the soul lie in the love of its Creator,—in likeness to him, communion with him,—in free glad service rendered, the joy of his approval felt. Freshly, fully was life and light enjoyed by man in the days of his innocence,—the light of God's gracious presence shone upon his soul and gladdened all his heart. Made in his Maker's image, he walked confidingly, rejoicingly, in the light of his countenance, reflecting in his own peaceful, loving, holy, happy spirit as much as such mirror could of the glory of his Creator. He disobeyed and died; the light went out; at one stride came the dark. But the gloom of that darkness, the stillness of

that death, were not suffered to prevail. From the beginning life and light have gone forth from Christ; all the spiritual animation that this world anywhere has witnessed, all the spiritual light by which its darkness has been alleviated, spring from him. The great Sun of Righteousness, indeed, seemed long of rising. It was a time of moon and stars and morning twilight, till he came. But at last he arose with healing in his beams. And now it is by coming unto him that death is turned into life, and darkness into light. He that hath him hath life, he that followeth him walketh not in darkness, but has the light of life.

The short colloquy betwixt Christ and the Pharisees, consequent upon his announcement of himself as the light of the world, ended in their lips being for the moment closed. The silence that ensued was speedily broken by our Lord's repeating what he had said before about his going away—going where they could not follow. The speech had formerly excited only wonder, and they had said *among themselves*, "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?" Now their passion against him has so risen that it excites

contempt, and they say openly, not indeed to him, but of him, "Will he kill himself? That would indeed be to go where we could not follow. Perhaps that may be what he means." The drawing of such a distinction between themselves and him gives to Jesus the opportunity of setting forth the real and radical difference that there was between them. The portraiture of their character and pedigree which, with truthful and unsparing hand, he proceeded to fill up, amid many rude breaks and scornful interruptions on their part, we shall not minutely scrutinize. One or two things only about the manner of our Lord's treatment of his adversaries in this word-battle with them, let us note.

He does not say explicitly that he is the Christ. His questioners were well aware what kind of person their Messiah was generally expected to be, how different from all that Jesus was. They would provoke him to make a claim which they knew would be generally disallowed. He will not do it. When they say, "Who art thou?" he contents himself by saying, 'I am essentially or radically that which I speak, my sayings reveal myself, and tell

who and what I am.' In this, as in so many other instances of his dealing with those opposed to him at Jerusalem, his sayings were confined to assertions or revelations, not of his Messiahship, but of his unity of nature, will, and purpose with the Father. This was the great stumbling-block that the Jews found ever and anon flung down before them. That in all which Jesus was and said and did he was to be taken as revealing the character and expressing the will of God, was what they never could allow, and the more that the idea of a connexion between him and God approaching to absolute identification was pressed upon them, the more they resented and rejected it. But why? Jesus himself told them. Their unbelief, he constantly asserted, sprung from a morally impure source; from an unwillingness to come into such living contact with the Father; from their dislike to the purity, the benevolence, the godliness that were in him as in the Father. When driven from the position they first assumed as children of Abraham, they claimed a still higher paternity, and said, "We have one Father, even God." Our Lord's reply was, "If God were

your Father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word."

They wore a mask; behind that mask they hid a malicious disposition, and so long as deceitfulness and malignity ruled their spirit and regulated their lives, children of Abraham, children of God, they were not, could not be. They might boast what other parentage they pleased, but their works proclaimed that they were none other than the children of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Very plain language, and very severe—not language for man to use to man—suitable alone for him who knew what was in man, who came as its light into the world, and discharged one of his offices as such in laying bare the hidden corruption with which he came into contact, for "all things that are reproved are manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."

"But as he spake these words many believed on him," and for them, amid all his rebukes of his enemies, this was his word of encouragement, that if they continued in his word, if they but followed faithfully the light that shone in him, they should know the truth, know him who was the truth, and in him, and by that truth, they should be made free. These Jews imagined that simply as the children of Abraham they were free. So fondly did they cling to this idea that often as the yoke of the stranger had been on them they were ready proudly to say, "We were never in bondage to any man." Notwithstanding this they were slaves—slaves to sin and Satan. In one sense they were in God's house, numbered outwardly as members of its household; but being actually such slaves, in that house they could not abide for ever. But if he who was not a servant in the house of another, but an heir in his own house—his Father's house—if he made his followers free, then were they free indeed. And into what a glorious liberty should they thus be introduced!—freedom from the Law, its curse and condemnation; freedom from the yoke

of Jewish and all other ceremonialism; freedom from the fear of guilt and the bondage of corruption; freedom to serve God willingly and lovingly, —to be all, do all, suffer all which his will requires, —this was the liberty wherewith Christ was ready to make free. This freedom was to be tasted but in imperfect measure by any here on earth, for still onward to the end the old tyrant whose subjects they had been would be making his presence and power felt; still onward to the end, while the mind was serving the law of God, a law would be in the members warring against the law of the mind. But the hour of a final and complete emancipation was to come at death. Death! it looked to nature like the stoppage of all life, the breaking of all ties, the quenching of all freedom and all joy. Not such was it to be to him who shared the life that Jesus breathes into the soul. To him it was to be rather light than darkness, rather life than death, the scattering of every cloud, the breaking of every fetter, the deliverance from every foe, the setting the spirit absolutely and for ever free to soar with unchecked, unshadowed wing, up to the fountain-head of all

life and blessedness, to bask in the sunshine for ever. "Verily, verily, if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death."

But now let us look a moment at the special testimonies to his own person and character which, upon this occasion, and in the course of these rough conflicts with scornful and contemptuous opponents, Jesus bore. Light is its own revealer. The sun can be seen alone in the beams that he himself sends forth. So is it with him who is the light of the world. It is in the light of his own revelation of himself that we can see Jesus as he is. And what, as seen in the beams that he here sheds forth, does he appear? Two features of his character stand prominently displayed: his sinless holiness, his pre-existence and divine dignity. In proof of the stainless purity of his nature and his life, Jesus when here on earth made a threefold appeal. He appealed to earth, to hell, to heaven, and earth, hell, and heaven each gave its answer back. Two of these appeals you have in the passage that is now before us. Jesus appealed to earth when, looking round upon those men who with the

keen eye of jealousy and hatred had been watching him from the beginning to see what flaws they could detect in him, he calmly and confidently said, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin, of any sin, the slightest transgression?' And earth gave her answer when these men stood speechless before him.

He appealed to hell—to that devil of whom he spoke so plainly as the father of all liars and all murderers, who would have accused and maligned him had he dared. "The prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in me"—nothing of his own, nothing that he can claim, no falsehood, no malice, no selfishness, no unholiness in me. And hell gave its answer when the devil whom Christ's word of power drove forth from his human habitation was heard to say, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

Again, our Saviour carried the appeal to heaven, and, standing in the presence of the Great Searcher of all hearts, he said, in words that had been blasphemous from any merely human lips, "I do always those things that please him." And thrice during his mortal career the heavens opened

above his head, and the voice of the Father was heard proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

What shall we think or say of him who claimed such perfect immunity from sin—the entire absence of anything that could draw down upon it the Divine displeasure, the full presence of all that could draw down upon it the Divine approval. Was he, who knew others so well, ignorant of himself, or, conscious of transgression, did he yet deny it? Ignorant beyond other men, a hypocrite worse than those whom he charged with hypocrisy, must Jesus Christ have been, if, in speaking of his sinlessness as he did, his speech was not the free and natural expression of a self-consciousness of perfect purity, truth, and holiness of heart and life. In presence of one realizing such unstained perfection, who never once in thought or word or deed swerved from the right, the true, the good, the holy, how humbled should we be under the consciousness of how different it is with us, and yet with that sense of humiliation should not the elevating, ennobling thought come in, that he in

whom the sublime idea of a sinless perfection stands embodied, was no other than our Lord and Saviour, who came to show us to what a height this weak and sinful humanity of ours could be raised, who became partaker of our nature that we through him might become partakers of the Divine, and of whom we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, when we shall see him as he is.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." Christ's day was no other than that of his manifestation in the flesh. Abraham rejoiced that he should see that day, and lived his earthly life cheered by the animating prospect. And he saw it, as Moses and Elijah did, for he was one of those who, in Christ's sense of the words, had not tasted of death, of whom it was witnessed that he liveth, to whom, in the realms of departed spirits, the knowledge of the Redeemer's advent had been conveyed.

Jesus had said that Abraham had seen his day. They twist his words as if he had said that he had seen Abraham. "Thou art not yet fifty

years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" The contemptuous query gives to our Lord the opportunity of lifting the veil that concealed his glory, and making the last, the greatest revelation of himself: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Not simply "Before Abraham was, I was," not simply a declaration of a being before Abraham, but a taking to himself of the great, the incommunicable name, carrying with it the assertion of self-existence, of supreme divinity. So they understood it, who instantly took up stones to stone him as a blasphemer. And so let us understand it, not taking up stones to stone him, but lifting up hearts and hands together to crown him Lord of all.

VI.

THE CURE OF THE MAN BORN BLIND.[1]

WITHIN the court of the Temple, in presence of the Pharisees and their satellites, Jesus had said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The saying, resented as egotistical and arrogant, led on to that altercation which ended in their taking up stones to cast at him, and in his hiding himself in some mysterious way and passing out of the Temple, "going through the midst of them." At one of the Temple gates, or by the road-side without, "as Jesus passed by he saw a man which was blind from his birth,"—a well-known city beggar, whom Jesus and his disciples may have often passed in their

[1] John ix.

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way up to the Temple. Now at the very time when we might have imagined him more than ordinarily desirous to proceed in haste, in order to put himself beyond the reach of the exasperated men out of whose hands he had just escaped, Jesus stops to look compassionately upon this man. He sees in him a fit subject for a work being done, which in the lower sphere of man's physical nature shall illustrate the truth which he had in vain been proclaiming in the treasury, that he was the light of the world. As He stops, his disciples gather round him and fix their eyes also upon the man whose case has arrested their Master's footsteps, and seems to have absorbed his thoughts. But their thoughts are not as his. They look, to think only of the rarity and severity of the affliction under which the man is labouring—to regard it as a judgment of God, whereby some great sin was punished—the man's own, it would be natural to suppose it should be; but then, the judgment had come before any sin had been committed by him—he had been blind from his birth. Could it be that the punishment had preceded the offence; or was this a case in which

the sins of the parents had been visited on their child? "Master," they say to Jesus in their perplexity, "who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The one thing that they had no doubt about,—and in having no such doubt, were only sharing in the sentiment of all the most devout of their fellow-countrymen,—was that some signal sin had been committed, upon which the signal mark of God's displeasure had been stamped. It was not as to the existence somewhere of some exceeding fault that they were in the least uncertain. Their only doubt was where to lay it. It was the false but deep conviction which lay beneath their question that Jesus desired to expose and correct when he so promptly and decisively replied, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents," neither the one nor the other has sinned so peculiarly that the peculiar visitation of blindness from birth has been visited on the transgression. Not that Jesus meant to disconnect altogether man's suffering from man's sins. Had he meant to do so, he would not have said to the paralytic whom he cured at the pool of Bethesda, "Go thy way, sin

no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee;" but that he wanted, by vigorous stroke, to lay the axe at the root of a prevalent superstitious feeling which led to erroneous and presumptuous readings of God's providences, connecting particular sufferings with particular sins, and arguing from the relative severity of the one to the relative magnitude of the other.

Nor was this the only instance in which our Saviour dealt in the same manner with the same popular error. But a few weeks from the time in which he spake in this way to his disciples, Jesus was in Peræa. There had been a riot in Jerusalem—some petty premature outburst of that insurrectionary spirit which was rife throughout Judea. Pilate had let loose his soldiers on the mob. Some Galileans who had taken part in the riot, or were supposed to have done so—for the Galileans were always in the front rank of any movement of the kind—were slain—slain even while engaged in the act of sacrificing, their blood mingled with their sacrifices: an incident so fitted to strike the public eye, to arouse the public indignation, that the news of it travelled

rapidly through the country. It reached the place where Christ was teaching. Some of his hearers, struck perhaps by something that he had said about the signs of the times and the judgments that were impending, took occasion publicly to tell him of it. Perhaps they hoped that the recital would draw out from him some burning expressions of indignation, pointed against the foreign yoke under which the country was groaning; the deed done by the Roman governor had been so gross an outrage upon their national religion, upon the sacredness of the holy Temple. If the tellers of the tale cherished any such expectation they were disappointed. As upon all like occasions, whenever any purely political question was brought before him, Christ evaded it. He never once touched or alluded to that aspect of the story. But there was another side of it upon which he perceived that the thoughts of not a few of his hearers were fastened. It was a terrible fate that these slaughtered Galileans had met—not only death by the Roman sword—but death within the courts of the Temple—death upon the very steps of the altar. There could be

but one opinion as to the deed of their murderers —those rough Gentile soldiers of Pilate. But the murdered, upon whom such a dreadful doom had fallen, what was to be thought of them? Christ's all-seeing eye perceived that already in the breasts of many of those around him, the leaven of that censorious, uncharitable, superstitious spirit was working, which taught them to attach all extraordinary calamities to extraordinary crimes. "Suppose ye," said Jesus, "that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you nay." To give his question and his answer a still broader aspect —to take out of them all that was peculiarly Galilean—he quotes another striking and well-known occurrence that had recently happened near Jerusalem—a calamity not inflicted by the hand of man. "Or those eighteen," he adds, "upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay." He does not deny that either the slaughtered Galileans or the crushed Jerusalemites were sinners. He does not say that they did not deserve their doom. He does not

repudiate or run counter to that strong instinct of the human conscience which in all ages has taught it to trace suffering to sin. What he does repudiate and condemn is the application of that principle to specific instances, by those who know so little, as we do, of the Divine purposes and aims in the separate events of life—making the temporal infliction the measure of the guilt from which it is supposed to spring. It is not a wrong thing for the man himself whom some sudden or peculiarly severe calamity overtakes, to search and try himself before his Maker, to see whether there has not been some secret sin as yet unrepented and unforsaken, which may have had a part in bringing the calamity upon him. It was not a wrong thing in Joseph's brethren, in the hour of their great distress in Egypt, to remember their former conduct, and to say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, therefore is this distress come upon us." It was not a wrong thing for the king of Besek, when they cruelly mutilated him, cutting off his thumbs and great toes, to say, "Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and great toes cut

off gathered their meat under my table. As I have done, so God hath requited me." But it was a wrong thing in the inhabitants of Melita, when they saw the viper fasten on Paul's hand, to think and say, that "no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." It was a wrong thing in the widow of Zarephath, when her son fell sick, to say to Elijah, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son?" It was a wrong thing for the friends of Job to deal with their afflicted brother as if his abounding misfortunes were so many proofs of a like abounding iniquity. It is a very wrong thing in any of us to presume to interpret any single dealing of God with others, particularly of a dark or adverse kind, for all such dispensations of his providence have a double character. They may be retributive, or they may be simply disciplinary, corrective, protective, purifying. They may come in anger, or they may be sent in love. And while as to ourselves it may be proper that we should view them as bearing

messages of warning, we are not at liberty as to others to attribute to them any other character than that of being the chastenings of a wise and loving Father.

"Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifest in him." Those works—works of mercy and almighty power—were given to Christ to do, and here was an opportunity for one of them being done. To pause thus by the way, to occupy himself with the case of this poor blind beggar, might seem a waste of time, the more so that the purpose of his persecutors to seize and to stone him had been so recently and so openly displayed. But that very outbreak of their wrath foretold to Jesus his approaching death—the close of his allotted time of earthly labour; and so he says, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 'I said so to those proud and unbelieving men from whose rough violence I have just escaped. I will prove now the truth of what I said by

bringing the light physically, mentally, spiritually, to this poor blind beggar.'

All this time not a word is spoken by the blind man himself. Whatever cries for help he may have raised when he heard the footsteps of the approaching company, as they stop before him he becomes silent. He hears the question about his own sins and his parents' sins put by strange Galilean tongues to one addressed evidently with the greatest respect. He hears the one thus appealed to say, with an authority that he wonders at, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents,"—grateful words to the poor man's ear. He may have thought, in common with others, that he had been signally marked as an object of the Divine displeasure. The words that he now hears may have helped to lift a load off his heart; already he may be more grateful to the speaker of these few words than if he had cast the largest money-gift into his bosom. But the speaker goes further: he says that he had been born blind "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." If it were not the work of God's anger in the punishment of his

own or his father's sins, what other work could it be? And who can this be who is now before him, who speaks of what he is, and what he does, and what he is about to do, with such solemnity and self-assurance? Who can tell us what new thoughts about himself and the calamity that had befallen him, what new thoughts about God and his purposes in thus dealing with him, what wonderings as to who this stranger can be that takes such an interest in him, what flutterings of hope may have passed through this poor man's spirit while the brief conversation between Christ and his disciples was going on, and during that short and silent interval which followed as Jesus "spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle"? This we know, that when Christ approached and laid his hand upon him, and anointed his eyes with that strange salve, and said to him, while yet his sightless balls were covered with what would have blinded for the time a man who saw, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," he had become so impressed as quietly to submit to so singular an operation, and, without a word of arguing or remonstrance, to obey the order given, and to go

off to the pool to wash. It lay not far off, at the base of the hill on which the Temple stood, up and around which he had so often groped his way. He went and washed, and lo a double miracle!—the one wrought within the eyeball, the other within the mind—each wonderful even among the wonders wrought by Christ. Within the same compass there is no piece of dead or living mechanism that we know of, so curious, so complex, so full of nice adjustments, as the human eye. It was the great Creator's office to make that eye and plant it in its socket, gifting it with all its varied powers of motion, outward and inward, and guarding it against all the injuries to which so delicate an instrument is exposed. It was the Creator's will that some fatal defect, or some fatal confusion of its parts and membranes, should from the first have existed in the eyeball of this man. And who but the Creator could it be that rectified the defect or removed the confusion, bestowing at once upon the renovated organ the full power of vision? Such instant reconstruction of a defective, or mutilated, or disorganized eye, though not in itself a greater, appears to us a

more surprising act of the Divine power than the original creation of the organ. You watch with admiration the operation of the man who, with a large choice of means and materials, makes, and grinds, and polishes, and adjusts the set of lenses of which a telescope is composed. But let some accident happen whereby all these lenses are broken and crushed together in one mass of confusion, what would you think of the man who could out of such materials reconstruct the instrument? It was such a display of the Divine power that was made when the man born blind went and washed and saw.

But however perfect the eye be, it is simply a transmitter of light, the outward organ by which certain impressions are made upon the optic nerves, by them to be conveyed to the brain, giving birth there to the sensations of sight. But these sensations of themselves convey little or no knowledge of the outward world till the observer's mind has learned to interpret them as signs of the position, forms, sizes, and distances of the outlying objects of the visible creation. It is but slowly that an infant learns this language

of the eye. It requires the putting forth of innumerable acts of memory, and the acquiring by much practice a facility of rapid interpretation. That the man born blind should be able at once to use his eyes as we all do, it was needed that this faculty should be bestowed on him at once, without any teaching or training, and when we fully understand (as it is somewhat difficult to do) what the powers were which were thus instantly conveyed, the mental will appear not less wonderful than the material part of the miracle of our Lord—that part of it too of which it is utterly impossible to give any explanation but the one that there was in it a direct and immediate putting forth of the Divine power. The skilful hand of the coucher may open the eye that has been blind from birth, but no human skill or power could confer at once that faculty of using the eye as we now do, acquired by us in the forgotten days of our infancy. It may be left to the fanaticism of unbelief to imagine that it was the clay and the washing which restored his sight to the man born blind, but no ingenuity of conception can point us to the natural means by which the

gift of perfect vision could have been at once conferred.

Yet of the fact we have the most convincing proof. It was so patent and public that there could be no mistake about it. It was subjected to the most searching investigation—to all the processes of a judicial inquiry. When one so well known as this blind beggar, whom so many had noticed on their way up to the Temple, was seen walking among the other worshippers, seeing as well as any of them, the question was on all sides repeated, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" Some said it was; others, distrusting their own sight, could only say he was like him; but he removed their doubts by saying, "I am he." Then came the question as to how his eyes were opened. He told them. Somehow or other, he had learned the name of his healer. "A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said to me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash, and I went and washed, and I received my sight." But Jesus had not yet been seen by him; he knew not where he was. It was so very singular a thing this that had been

done—made more so by its having been done upon a Sabbath-day—that some of those to whom the tale was told would not be satisfied till the man went with them to the Pharisees, sitting in council in a side-chamber of the Temple. They put the same question to him the others had done, as to how he had received his sight, and got the same reply. Even had Jesus cured him by a word, they would have regarded it as a breach of the Sabbath, but when they hear of his making clay and putting it on his eyes, and then sending him to lave it off in the waters of Siloam —all servile work forbidden, as they taught— they seize at once upon this circumstance, and say, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day." The question now was not about the cure, which seemed, in truth, admitted, but about the character of the curer. Such instant and peremptory condemnation of him as a Sabbath-breaker roused a spirit of opposition even in their own court. Joseph was there, or Nicodemus, or some one of a like sentiment, who ventured, in opposition to the prevailing feeling, to put the question, "How can a man

that is a sinner do such miracles?" But they are overborne. The man himself, at least, who is there before them, will not dare to defend a deed which he sees that the majority of them condemn. They turn to him and say, "What sayest *thou* of him that hath opened thine eyes?" They are mistaken. Without delay or misgiving, he says at once, "He is a prophet." They order him to withdraw. They are somewhat perplexed. They wish to keep in hand the charge of Sabbath-breaking, but how can they do so without admitting the miracle? It would serve all their purposes could they only make it out that there had been some deception or mistake as to the man's having been *born* blind—the peculiar feature of the miracle that had attracted to it such public notice. They summon his parents, who have honesty enough to acknowledge that the man is their son, and that he was born blind, but as to how it is that he now sees, they are too timid to say a word. They know it had been resolved that if any man confessed that Jesus was the Christ, he was to be excommunicated—a sentence carrying the gravest conse-

quences, inflicting the severest social penalties. But they have great confidence in the sagacity of their son; he is quick-witted enough, they think, to extricate himself from the dilemma. "He is of age," they say; "ask him: he shall speak for himself." He is sent for: appears again in their presence, ignorant of what has transpired, of what his parents, in their terror, may have said. And now, as if their former judgment against Jesus had been quite confirmed, and stood unquestionable, they say to him, "Give God the praise"—an ordinary Jewish form of adjuration. "My son," said Joshua to Achan, "give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him, and tell me now what thou hast done." And so now these Pharisees to this poor beggar. "My son, give God the praise. We know, and do you confess, that this man is a sinner." They are again at fault. In blunt, plain speech, that tells sufficiently that he will not believe that Jesus is a sinner simply because they say it, he answers, "Whether he be a sinner, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Balked in their first object to browbeat and over-

awe him, they will try again whether they can detect any inconsistency or contradiction in his testimony, and so they ask him to tell them over again how the thing had happened. Seeing through all the thin disguise they are assuming in seeming to be so anxious to get at the truth, he taunts them, saying, "I told you before, and ye did not hear; wherefore would you hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?" No ambiguous confession of discipleship on his part. So at least they took it who replied, "Thou art his disciple; we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." Poor though he be, and altogether at the mercy of the men before whom he stands, the healed man cannot bear to hear his healer spoken of in such contemptuous terms. With a courage that ranks him as the first of the great company of confessors, and with a wisdom that raises him above all those high-born and well-taught Pharisees, he says, "Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God

heareth not sinners; but if a man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." So terse, so pungent, so unanswerable the speech, that passion now takes the place of argument, and the old and vulgar weapon of authority is grasped and used. Meanly casting his calamity in his teeth, they say, "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out—excommunicated him on the spot.

Jesus hears of the wisdom and the fearlessness that he had displayed in the defence of the character and doings of his healer, and of the heavy doom that had in consequence been visited on him, and throws himself across his path. Meeting him by the way, he says to him, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" Up to this moment he had never seen the man who had anointed his eyes with the clay and bidden him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. He might not by look alone have recognised him, but the voice he never could forget. As soon as that voice

is heard, he knows who the speaker is. Much he might have liked to tell, and much to ask; but all other questions are lost in the one, that with such emphasis the Saviour puts—"Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" He had heard of men of God, prophets of God, the Christ of God: but the Son of God—one claiming the same kind of paternity in God that every true son claims in his father—such a one he had never heard of. "Who is he, Lord?" he asks, "that I might believe in him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." Never but once before that we know of or can remember—never but to the woman of Samaria—was so clear, so direct, so personal a revelation of himself made by Jesus Christ. In both—the woman by the well-side, the blind beggar by the way-side—Jesus found simplicity and candour, quickness of intelligence, openness to evidence, readiness to confess. Both followed the light already given. Both, before any special testimony to his own character was borne by Jesus himself, acknowledged him to be a prophet. Both thus stepped out far in advance

of the great mass of those around them—in advance of many who were reckoned as disciples of the Lord. The man's, however, was the fuller and firmer faith. It had a deeper foundation to rest on. Jesus exhibited to the woman such a miracle of knowledge as drew from her the exclamation, "Sir, I perceive thou art a prophet." Upon the man he wrought such a miracle of power and love as begat within the deep conviction that he was a true worshipper of God—a faithful doer of the Divine will—a man of God—a prophet of God; and to this conviction he had adhered before the frowning rulers, and in face of all that they could do against him. He had risked all and lost much rather than deny such faith as he had in Jesus. And to him the fuller revelation was imparted. Jesus only told the woman of Samaria that it was Messiah—the Christ of God—who stood before her. He told the man that it was the Son of God who stood before him. How far the discovery of his Sonship to God—his true and proper divinity—went beyond that of his Messiahship, we shall have occasion hereafter to unfold. But see how in-

stantaneous the faith that follows the great and unexpected disclosure. "Who is he, Lord?" the Son of God of whom you speak? "I that speak unto thee am he. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him;" worshipped him as few of his immediate followers yet had done: worshipped him as Thomas and the others did when they had the great miracle of the resurrection and the sight of the risen Saviour to originate and confirm their faith. What shall we say of this quick faith and its accompanying worship—evidences as they were of a fresh full tide of light poured into this man's mind? Shall we say that here another miracle was wrought—an inward and spiritual one, great and wonderful as that when by the pool-side of Siloam, he washed those sightless eyeballs, and as he washed, the clear, pure, bubbling water showed itself—the first bright object that met his opening vision—and he lifted up his eyes and looked around, and the hills of Zion and of Olivet, and the fair valley of the Kedron, burst upon his astonished gaze? That perhaps were wrong, for great as the work of God's Holy Spirit is in enlightening and quicken-

ing the human soul, it is not a miraculous one, and should not be spoken of as such. But, surely, of the two—the opening of the bodily and the opening of the spiritual vision—the latter was God's greater and higher gift.

VII.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.[1]

THE blind beggar of Jerusalem was healed. How different the impression and effect of this healing upon the man himself, on the one side, and the Pharisees, his excommunicators, on the other! He a poor, uneducated, yet simple-minded, simple-hearted man, grasping with so firm a hold, and turning to such good account, the knowledge that he had, and eager to have more; reaping, as the fruit of Christ's act of mercy met in such a spirit, the unfolding by our Lord himself of his highest character and office: they, the guides and leaders of the people, so well taught and so wise, unable to discredit the miracle, yet seizing upon the circumstance that it was done upon the Sabbath, and turning this into a reproach, their prejudices fed and strengthened, their eyes growing

[1] John ix. 39-41; x. 1-39.

more blinded, their hearts more hardened against Christ. This contrast appears to have struck the mind of our Lord himself. It was in the Temple, the only place where he could meet his fellow-men while under the ban of the Sanhedrim, that the healed man met Jesus. They may have been alone, or nearly so, when Christ put the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and having got the answer which showed what readiness there was to receive further light, made the great disclosure of his Divinity. Soon, however, a number of the Pharisees approach, attracted by the interview. As he sees, compares, contrasts the two—the man and them—he says, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not" (as this poor blind beggar) "may see, and that they which see" (as the Pharisees) "might be made blind." The Pharisees are not so blind as not to perceive the drift and bearing of the speech. They mockingly inquire, "Are we blind also?" "If ye were blind," is our Lord's reply—utterly blind, had no power or faculty of vision, "ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see." 'You think you see; you

pride yourselves on seeing so much better and so much further than others. Unconscious of your existing blindness, you will not come to me to have your eyes opened: will not submit to the humbling operation at my hands: therefore your sin remaineth, abides, and accumulates upon you. Here was a poor stricken sheep, whom ye, claiming to be the shepherds of the flock, have cast out from your fold, whom I have sought and found. Let me tell you who and what a true shepherd of God's flock is. He is one that enters by the door into the sheepfold, to whom the porter opens readily the door, whose voice the sheep are quick to recognise, who calleth his own sheep by name, going before them and leading them out. He is a stranger, a thief, a robber, and no true shepherd of the sheep, who will not enter by the door, but climbeth up some other way.' Acute enough to perceive that this was said concerning human shepherds generally, leaders or pastors of the people: intended to distinguish the true among such from the false, and that some allusion to themselves was intended, Christ's hearers were yet at a loss to know what the door

could be of which he was speaking, and who the thieves and robbers were. Dropping, therefore, all generality and all ambiguity, Jesus adds, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." 'I have been, I am, I ever shall be, the one and only door of entrance and of exit, both for shepherds and for sheep. All that ever came before me, without acknowledging me, independently of me, setting me aside, yet pretending to be shepherds of the sheep—they are the thieves and the robbers. I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, whether he claims to be a shepherd, or numbers himself merely as one of the flock—those who are shepherds as to others, being still sheep as to me—if any man so enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'

This much being said of the door, the one way of entrance into God's true fold, the image of the door is dropped, and without circumlocution or reserve Christ announces himself as the Good Shepherd, and proceeds to describe his character and work as such. 'I am the Good Shepherd; not simply a kind or loving shepherd, as opposed

to such as are unkind or harsh in their treatment of the flock, but I am the one, the only one, in whom all the qualities needful to constitute the true and faithful shepherd meet and culminate in full and harmonious perfection. I am the Good Shepherd, who has already done, who waits still to do, that for the sheep which none other ever did or could do.' On one or two of the qualities or characteristics which Christ here claims for himself, as wearing and executing the office, let us now fix our thoughts.

1. He sets before us the minute personal interest that he takes in each individual member of his flock. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." The allusion here is to the fact that Eastern shepherds did give a separate name to each separate sheep, who came in time to know it, and, on hearing it, to follow at the shepherd's call. It is thus that, when Isaiah would set forth the relation in which the Great Creator stands to the starry host, he represents him as leading them out at night as a shepherd leadeth out his sheep. "Lift up your eyes, and behold who hath created these things; that bring-

eth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names." It is no mere general knowledge, general care, that the Great Creator possesseth and exercises. There is not a single star in all that starry host unnoticed, unguided, unnamed. The eye that seeth all, sees each as distinctly as if it alone were before it. The hand that guideth all, guides each as carefully as if it alone had to be directed by it. So is it with Jesus and the great multitude of his redeemed. Singling each out of that vast company, he says, "I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine." "I have graven thy name on the palms of my hands, to be ever there before mine eye. To him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he who receiveth it." Individual names are given to mark off individual objects, to separate each, visibly and distinctly, from all others of the same kind. A new island is discovered, its discoverer gives to it its new name. A new instrument is invented, its inventor gives to it its new name. In that island, as distinguished from all other islands, its

discoverer takes ever afterwards a special interest. In that instrument, as different from all others, a like special interest is taken by its inventor. Another human spirit is redeemed to God: its Redeemer gives to it its new name, and for ever afterwards in that spirit he takes a living, personal, peculiar interest: bending over it continually with infinite tenderness, watching each doubt, each fear, each trial, each temptation, each fall, each rising again, each conflict, each victory, each defeat, every movement, minute or momentous, by which its progress is advanced or retarded, watching each and all with a solicitude as special and particular as if it were upon it that the exclusive regards of his loving heart were fixed.

It was no vague, indefinite, indiscriminate goodwill to all mankind that Jesus showed when here on earth. A large part of the narrative of his life and labours is occupied with the details of his intercourse with individuals, intended to set forth the special personal interest in each of them that he took. Philip brings Nathanael to him. Jesus says, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." "Go, call

thy husband, and come hither." "I have no husband," the woman of Samaria answers. Jesus says, "Thou hast well said thou hast no husband, for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly." A lone, afflicted woman creeps furtively near to him, that she may touch but the hem of his garment; she is healed, but must not go away imagining that she was unseen, unrecognised. Zaccheus climbs up into the sycamore, expecting simply to get a sight of him as he passes by. Christ comes up, stops before the tree, looks up, and says, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Too numerous to go on quoting thus were the manifestations of personal and particular regard shown by Jesus before his death. And when he rose from the sepulchre, he rose with the same heart in him for special affection. It was the risen Saviour who put the message into the angel's lips, "Go, tell the dis-

ciples and Peter that he is risen from the dead." And when he ascended up to heaven, he carried the same heart with him to the throne. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" There was not one of those, his little ones, whom Saul was persecuting, that he did not identify with himself. No vague, indefinite, indiscriminate superintendence is that which the great Good Shepherd still exercises over his flock, but a care that particularizes each separate member of it, and descends to the minutest incidents of their history.

We rightly say that one great object of the Incarnation was so to manifest the unseen Divinity, that our weak thoughts and our languid affections might the more easily comprehend and embrace him as embodied in the person of Jesus Christ the Son. But we fail to realize the full meaning, and to take home to ourselves the full comfort of the Incarnation, if we regard not our Divine Redeemer as seeing each of us wherever we are as distinctly as he saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, Zaccheus upon the sycamore-tree—as knowing all about our past history as minutely as he

knew all about that of the woman by the well-side —sympathizing as truly and tenderly with all our spiritual trials and sorrows as he did with those of Peter and the churches whom Saul was persecuting.

2. Christ speaks of the mutual knowledge, love, and sympathy which unites the Shepherd and the sheep, creating a bond between them of the closest and most endearing kind. "I know my sheep, and am known of mine, as my Father knoweth me, and as I know the Father." The mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and the sheep is likened thus to the mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son. The ground of the comparison cannot be in the omniscience possessed equally by the Father and the Son, in virtue of which each fully knows the other, for no such faculty is possessed by the sheep, and yet their knowledge of the Shepherd is said to be the same in kind with his knowledge of them, and both to be the same in kind with the Father's knowledge of the Son, and the Son's knowledge of the Father. What possibly can be meant by this but that there is a bond of acquaintanceship, affection, com-

munion, fellowship between each true believer and his Saviour, such in its origin, such in its strength, such in its sacredness, such in its present blessedness, such in its glorious issues in eternity, that no earthly bond whatever—no, not the closest that binds man to man, human heart to human heart—can offer the fit or adequate symbol of it, to get which we must climb to those mysterious heights, to that mysterious bond, by which the Father and the Son are united in the intimacies of eternal love? This bond consists in oneness of life, unity of spirit, harmony of desire and affection. In the spiritual world, great as the distances may be which divide its members (and vast indeed is that distance at which any of us stand from our Redeemer), like discerneth like even afar off, like draws to like, like links itself to like, truth meets truth, and love meets love, and holiness clings to holiness. The new-born soul turns instinctively to him in whom it has found its better, its eternal, life. Known first of him, it knows him in return; loved first by him, it loves him in return. He comes to take up his abode in it, and it hastens

to take up its abode in him. He dwells in it; it dwells in him. And broken and imperfect as, on the believer's part, this union and communion is, yet is there in it a nearness, a sacredness, a tenderness that belongs to no other tie by which the human spirit can be bound.

3. The manner in which the Good Shepherd leads his flock. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out; and when he putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him." The language is borrowed from pastoral life in Eastern lands; and it is remarkable that in almost every point in which a resemblance is traced between the office and work of the Shepherd and that of Christ, the usages of Eastern differ from those of our Western lands. Our shepherds drive their flocks before them; and, in driving, bring a strong compulsion of some kind to bear upon the herd. This fashion of it puts all noticing, knowing, naming, calling of particular sheep out of the question; it is not an attraction from before, it is a propulsion from behind, that sets our flocks of sheep moving upon the way; it is not the hearing of its name, it is not

the call of its master, it is not by the sight of him going on before that any single sheep is induced to move onward in the path. It is quite different in the East: the Eastern shepherd goes before his sheep, he draws them after him—draws them by those ties of dependence, and trust, and affection that long years of living together have established between them. He calls them by their name; they hear and follow. Hence the language of the Old Testament—"The Lord is my shepherd; he leadeth me beside the still waters." "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and of Aaron." "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock"—a usage this of Eastern shepherd life truly and beautifully illustrative of the mode by which Jesus guides his people onward to the fold of their eternal rest; not by fear, not by force, not by compulsion of any kind—no, but by love; by the attraction of his loving presence, the force of his winning example. No guide or pastor he, like those Pharisees whom Jesus had in his eye when, in contrast to them, he called himself the Good Shepherd—men binding heavy

burdens, and laying them on otner men's shoulders, whilst they would not touch them themselves with one of their fingers. In our blessed Lord and Master we have one who himself trod before us every step that he would have us tread, bore every burden he would have us bear, met every temptation he would have us meet, shared every grief he would have us share, did every duty he would have us do. Study it aright, and it will surprise you to discover over what a wide and varied field of human experience the example of our Saviour stretches, how difficult it is to find a position or experience of our common human life to which you may not find something answering in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

4. The consummating act of his love for the sheep, and the perfect voluntariness with which that act is done. "I am the Good Shepherd—the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." The hireling undertakes to guard the sheep as best he can. It is expected that he should be vigilant, alert, courageous in their defence, running at times, if need be, some risk even of limb or life. But no owner of a flock ever bound it

upon the shepherd whom he hired, as a condition of his office, that if ever it came to be the alternative that the sheep must perish, or the shepherd perish, the latter must give up his life to save the flock. A human life is too precious a thing to be sacrificed in such a way. The owner of the flock would not give his own life for the sheep: he could not righteously ask his hireling to do it. The intrinsic difference in nature and in worth between the man and the sheep is such as to preclude the idea of a voluntary surrender of life by the one, simply to preserve the other. How much in value above all the lives for which it was given was that of God's own eternal Son, we have no means of computing; but we can see how far above all sacrifice, that either the owner of the flock acting himself as shepherd, or any under-shepherd whom he hired, ever made or could be expected to make, was that which Jesus made when he laid down his life for the sheep. Yet how freely was this done! "I lay down my life that I might take it again: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down,

and I have power to take it again." Life is that mysterious thing the giving and restoring of which the Creator keeps in his own hands. No skill or power of man ever made a new living thing. No skill or power of man ever rekindled the mystic light of life when once gone out. The power lies with man to lay down or take away his own life, but once laid down, what man is he that can take it up again? Yet Jesus speaks as one who has the recovery of his own life as much at his command as the relinquishing of it, speaks of laying it down in order to take it again. He would have it to be known, that whatever he might permit the men to do who had already resolved to take his life, his death would not be their doing, but his own; a death undergone spontaneously on his part, of his own free and unconstrained choice. Most willingly, through sheer love and pity, out of the infinite fulness of his divine compassion, was he to lay down his life for the sheep, that thus they might have life, and have it more abundantly than they otherwise could have—his death their life—his life from the dead drawing their life up

along with it and linking their eternity with his own.

So we understand, and may attempt to illustrate this description by himself of himself as the Good Shepherd; but to the men who first listened to it, especially to those Pharisees whose conduct as shepherds it was meant to expose, how absolutely unintelligible in many of its parts must it have appeared! What an assumption in making himself the one and only door, in raising himself so high above all other shepherds, representing himself as possessed of attributes that none of them possessed, making sacrifices none of them ever made! If a shepherd gave his life for the sheep, one would think that the sheep would lose instead of gain; would, in consequence of his removal, be all the more at the mercy of the destroyer. But here is a shepherd, whose death is held out as not only protecting the sheep from death, but imparting to them a new life; who dies, while yet by his dying, they lose nothing—do not even lose him as their shepherd—for he no sooner dies than he lives again to resume his shepherd's office. More

than obscure—ambitious, and utterly self-contradictory must this account of himself have appeared to the listening Pharisees, their recoil not lessened by Christ's dropping incidentally the hint that there were other sheep, not of the Jewish fold, whom he meant to bring in, so that there should be one fold, over which he should be the one shepherd. "There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings." To many they appeared so presumptuous and inexplicable, that they said, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" There were others who, unable to give any explanation of the sayings, yet clung to the evidence of his miracles, particularly of the one they had just witnessed. "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

Leaving them to settle these differences among themselves, Jesus withdrew; and for two months —from the time of the Feast of Tabernacles to that of the Feast of the Dedication—the curtain drops over Jerusalem, and we see and hear no more of anything said or done by Jesus there. Where and how were those two months spent?

Many think that our Lord must have remained in or near the capital during this interval. It appears to us much more likely that he had returned to Galilee. We are expressly told that he would not walk in "Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him." After the formal attempt of the rulers to arrest him, and after the populace having taken up stones to stone him, during the Feast of Tabernacles, it seems little likely that he would remain so long a time within their reach and power. When next he appears in Solomon's porch, and the Jews gather round him, the tone of the conversation that ensues, in which there is so direct a reference to his declarations about himself, uttered at the close of the preceding festival, is best explained by our conceiving that this was a sudden reappearance of Jesus in the midst of them, when the thoughts both of himself and his hearers naturally reverted to the incidents of their last interview in the Temple. "Then came the Jews round about him, and said, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." There was not a little petulance, and a

large mixture of hypocrisy in the demand. These were not honest inquirers seeking only relief from perplexing doubts. Whatever Christ might say about himself, their mind about him was quite made up. They do not come to ask about that late discourse of his in which he had spoken so plainly about his being the one and only true shepherd of the sheep. They do not come to inquire further about that door, by which he had said that the true fold could alone be entered. They come with the one distinct and abrupt demand, that he should tell them plainly whether he was the Christ; apparently implying some readiness on their part to believe, but only such a readiness as the men around the cross expressed when they exclaimed, "Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe." They want him to assert that he was the Christ. They want to get the evidence from his own lips on which his condemnation by the Sanhedrim could be grounded; knowing beside that an express claim on his part to the Messiahship would alienate many even among those whose incredulity had been temporarily shaken.

There was singular wisdom in our Lord's reply: "I told you before, and ye believed not." In no instance had he ever openly declared to these Jews of Jerusalem that he was the Christ. Nor was he now about to affirm it in the way that they prescribed. Nevertheless it was quite true that he had often told them who and what he was; told enough to satisfy them that he must be either their long-expected Messiah or a deceiver of the people. And though he had said nothing, his works had borne no ambiguous testimony to his character and office. But they had not received, they had rejected all that evidence. They wanted plain speaking, and now they get it,—get more of it than they expected or desired,—for Jesus not only broadly proclaims their unbelief, but, reverting to that unwelcome discourse which was still ringing in their troubled ears, he tells them of the nature and the source of their unbelief: "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Without dwelling, however, upon this painful topic,—one about which these Jews then, and we readers of the Gospel now, might be disposed to put many questions, to which

no satisfactory answers from any quarter might come to us,—Jesus goes on to dwell upon what to him, as it should be to us, was a far more grateful topic,—the characteristics and the privileges of his own true and faithful flock: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." That and more he had previously said while speaking of himself as the good shepherd, and noting some of the characteristics of his sheep. But now he will add something more as to the origin and nature, the steadfast and eternal endurance, of that new relationship, into which, by becoming his, all the true members of his spiritual flock are admitted.

"And I give unto them eternal life." Spiritual life, life in God, to God, is the new, fresh gift of Christ's everlasting love. To procure and to impart it was the great object of his mission to our earth. "I am come," he said, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." His incarnation was the manifestation of this life in all its fulness in his own person. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto

you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." The life not flowing from the light, but the light from the life, even as our Lord himself had said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

There are gifts of Christ's purchase and bestowment that he makes over at once, and in a full completed form, to the believer, such as pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the title to the heavenly inheritance. But the chief gift of his love,—the life of faith, of love, of meek endurance, of self-sacrificing service and suffering—comes not to any of us now in such a form. It is but the germ of it that is planted in the heart. Its history here is but that of the seed as it lies in the damp, cold earth, as it rots and moulders beneath the sod, waiting the sunshine and the shower, a large part of it corrupting, decaying, that out of the very bosom of rottenness, out of the very heart of death, the new life may spring. Could but an intelligent consciousness

descend with the seed into the earth, and attend the different processes that go on there, we should have an emblem of the too frequent consciousness that accompanies those first stages of the spiritual life, in which, amid doubts and fears, surrounded by the besetting elements of darkness, weakness, corruption, death, the soul struggles onward into the life everlasting.

But weak as it is in itself, in its first beginnings, this spiritual life partakes of the immortality, the immutability, of the source from which it springs. It is this which bestows such preciousness on it. Put into a man's hand the seed of a flower-bearing or fruit-bearing plant, it is not the bare bulb he grasps he thanks you for. It would have but little worth in his eyes were it to remain for ever in the condition in which he gets it. It is the capacity for after growth, the sure promise of living flower and fruit that lies enwrapped within, that gives it all its value. Slowly but surely does the mysterious principle of life that lodges in it operate, till the flower expands before the eye and the ripened fruit drops into the hand. So is it with the seed of the divine life lodged by the

Spirit in the soul; with this difference, that for it there is to be no autumn season of decay and death. It is to grow, and grow for ever,—ever expanding, ever strengthening, ever maturing; its perpetuity due to the infinite and unchangeable grace and power of him on whom it wholly hangs. Strictly speaking, our natural life is as entirely dependent on God as our spiritual one. But there is this great distinction between the two,—the one may run its course, too often does so, without any abiding sense on the part of him who is passing through it of his absolute and continued dependence on the great Lifegiver. The other cannot do so. Its essence lies in the ever consciousness of its origin, its continuance in the preservation of that consciousness. You may try to solve the phenomena of life in its lower types and forms, by imagining that a separate independent element or principle is bestowed at first by the Creator, which is left afterwards, apart from any connexion with him, to develop its latent inherent qualities. You cannot solve thus the life that is hidden with Christ in God. Apart from him who gave it being, it has no vitality.

It begins in a sense of entire indebtedness to him; it continues only so long as that sense of indebtedness is sustained. It is not within itself that the securities for its continuance are to be found.

"My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hands." Are we not entitled to gather from these words the comforting assurance that all who by the secret communications of his grace have had this life transfused into their souls, shall be securely and eternally upheld by the mighty power of Christ, so that they shall never perish?—not so upheld, whatever they afterwards may be or do, not so upheld that the thought of their security may slacken their own diligence or tempt them to transgress, but so that the very sense of their having such a presence and such a power as that of Jesus ever with them to protect and bless, shall operate as a new spring and impulse to all holy activities, and shall keep from ever becoming or ever doing that whereby his friendship

would be finally and for ever forfeited and lost. Do we feel the first faint beatings of the new life in our heart? Do we fear that these may be so checked and hardened as to be finally and for ever stopped? Let us not think of our weakness, but of Christ's strength; of our faith, but of his faithfulness; of the firmness of our hold of him, but of the firmness of his hold of us. The hollow of that hand of our Redeemer is the one safe place for us into which to put our sinful soul. Not into the hand of the Father, as the great and holy Lawgiver, would the spirit in the first exercises of penitence and faith venture to thrust itself, lest out of that hand it should indignantly be flung, and scattered and lost should be the wealth of its immortality. It is into the hand of the Son, the Saviour, that it puts itself. Yet, soon as ever it does so, the other hand, that of the Father, closes over it, as if the redoubled might of Omnipotence waited and hastened to guard the treasure. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. . . . No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." The believer's life is hid "with Christ." Far up

beyond all reach of danger this of itself would place it. But further still, it is hid "with Christ in God." Does this not, as it were, double the distance, and place the breadth of two infinites between it and the possibility of perishing?

"I and my Father are one." It was on his saying so that they took up stones again to stone him. He might have claimed to be Christ, but there had been nothing blasphemous in his doing so. Many of the people—some even of the rulers—believed, or half suspected, that he was the Messiah; yet it never was imagined that in setting forth such a claim Jesus was guilty of a crime for which he might righteously be stoned to death. The Jews were not expecting the Divine Being to appear as their Messiah. They were looking only for one in human nature, of ordinary human parentage, to come to be their king. It is not till he speaks of his hand being of equal power with the Father's to protect—till he grounds that equality of power upon unity of nature—till he says that he and the Father are one—that they take up stones to stone him. And their words explain their ac-

tions. While yet the stones are in their hands, Jesus says to them, "Many good works have I showed you of my Father, for which of these works do ye stone me?" Ready for the moment to concede anything as to the character of his works, they answer, "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." They understood him as asserting his divinity. Had they misunderstood his words, how easy it had been for Christ to correct their error—to tell them that he was no blasphemer as they thought him; that in calling himself the Son of God he did not mean to claim equality with the Father. He did not do so. He quotes, indeed, in the first instance, a sentence from their own Scriptures, in which their judges were called gods; but he proceeds immediately thereafter to separate himself from, and to exalt himself above, those to whom, because of their office, and because of the word of God coming to them, the epithet was one or twice applied, and reasons from the less to the greater. He says, "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of

God came, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" At first there was some ambiguity in the defence. Although intimating that the appellation might be applied with more propriety to him than to any of their old judges, it might be on the ground only of a higher office or higher mission than theirs that Jesus was reasoning. They listen without interrupting him. But when he adds—"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, yet believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him," they see that he is taking up the same ground as at the first—is claiming to be equal with the Father—is making himself God; and so once again they seek to take him—to deal with him as a blasphemer; but he escaped out of their hands. That neither upon this nor upon any other occasion of the same kind did our Lord complain of being condemned mistakenly when regarded as being guilty of blasphemy, nor offer the explanation which at once would have set

aside the charge, we regard as the clearest of all proofs that the Jews were not in error in interpreting his sayings as they did.

We take, then, our Lord's wonderful sayings at the Feast of Dedication as asserting the essential unity of nature and attributes between himself and the Father, and as thus assuring us of the perfect and everlasting security and well-being of all who put their souls for keeping into his hand.

VIII.

INCIDENTS IN OUR LORD'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.[1]

WE are inclined to believe that it was during the two months' interval betwixt the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication that Christ's last visit to Galilee was paid—his farewell taken of the home of his youth—the scenes of his chief labours. Those labours had lasted for about two years, and in them an almost ceaseless activity had been displayed. He had made many circuits through all the towns and villages of the district, performed innumerable miracles, and delivered innumerable addresses to larger or smaller audiences. Yet the visible results had not been great. He had attached twelve men to him as his constant and devoted attendants. There were four or five hundred more ready to acknowledge

[1] Luke ix. 51-62; x. 1-24.

themselves as his disciples. A vast excitement and a large measure of public sympathy had at first been awakened. Multitudes were ready to hail him as the great expected Deliverer. But as the months rolled on, and there was nothing in his character, or teaching, or doings answering to their ideas of what this deliverer was to be and do, they got incredulous—their incredulity fanned into strength by a growing party headed by the chief Pharisees, who openly rejected and reviled him. There had not been much in his earlier instructions to which exception could be taken, but when he began at a later period to speak of himself as the bread of life, and to declare that unless men ate his flesh and drank his blood they had no life in them, his favour with the populace declined, and they were even ready to believe all that his enemies insinuated, as to his being a profane man—an enemy to Moses and to their old laws. Not a few were still ready to regard him as a prophet, perhaps the forerunner of the Messiah; but outside the small circle of his immediate attendants there were few if any who recognised him as the Christ of God. Of

this decline in favour with the multitude his adversaries greedily availed themselves, and Galilee was fast becoming as dangerous a home for him as Judea. Meanwhile his own disciples had been slowly awakening from their first low and earthly notions of him—their eyes slowly opening to the recognition of the great mystery of his character, as being no other than the incarnate Son of God. Till they were lifted up above their old Jewish notions of the Messiah—till they came to perceive how singular was the relationship in which Jesus stood to the Father, how purely spiritual were the ends which he came to accomplish—he did not, could not, intelligibly speak to them of his approaching death, resurrection, and ascension. The confession of Peter in the name of all the rest that he was the Christ, the Son of God, marked at once the arrival of the period at which Jesus began so to speak, and the close of his labours in Galilee. On both sides, on the part alike of friends and enemies, things were ripening for the great termination, the time had come "that he should be received up," and "he steadfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem."

Starting from Capernaum and travelling southward by the route on the west side of the Jordan, he sends messengers before his face, who enter a village of the Samaritans. We remember how gladly he had been welcomed two years before in one town of that district, how ready the inhabitants of Sychar had been to hail him as the Messiah, and we may wonder that now the people of a Samaritan village should so resist his entrance and reject his claims. It may have been that they were men of a different spirit from that of the Sycharites. But it may also have arisen from this—that the Samaritans at first had hoped that if he were indeed the Messiah, he would decide in favour of their temple and its worship, but that now, when they see him going up publicly to the feasts at Jerusalem, and sanctioning by his presence the ordinances of the sanctuary there, their feelings had changed from those of friendliness into those of hostility. However it was, the men of this village—the first Samaritan one that lay in the Lord's path—"would not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem." Some marked expressions of their

unfriendliness had been given, some open indignities flung upon his messengers, of which James and John were witnesses. These two disciples had been lately with their Master on the Mount of Transfiguration, and had seen there the homage that the great prophet Elijah had rendered to him. They were now in the very region of Elijah's life and labours. They had crossed the head of the great plain, at one end of which stood Jezreel, and at the other the heights of Carmel. The events of the last few weeks had been filling their minds with vague yet unbounded hopes. Their Master had thrown off much of his reserve, had shown them his glory on the mount, had spoken to them as he had never done before, had told them of the strange things that were to happen at Jerusalem, had made them feel by the very manner of his entrance upon this last journey from Galilee, that the crisis of his history was drawing on. He courts secrecy no longer. He sends messengers before his face. He is about to make a public triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Yet here are Samaritans who openly despise him—will not give him even a night's

lodging in their village. The fervid attachment to Jesus that beats in the hearts of James and John kindles into indignation at this treatment. Their indignation turns into vengeful feeling towards the men who were guilty of such conduct. They look around. The heights of Carmel remind them what Elias had done to the false prophets, and fancying that they were fired with the same spirit, and had a still weightier wrong to avenge, they turn to Jesus, saying, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" They expect Jesus to enter fully and approvingly into the sentiment by which they are animated; they know it springs from love to him; they are so confident that theirs is a pure and holy zeal, that they never doubt that the fire from heaven waits to be its minister; they want only to get permission to use the bolts of heavenly vengeance that they believe are at their command. How surprised they must have been when Jesus turned and rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Jesus is not now here for any personal insult to be offered—any personal injury to be inflicted; but still he stands represented, as he himself has taught us, in the persons of all his little ones, in the body of his Church, the company of the faithful. Among these little ones, within that company, how many have there been, how many are there still, who cherish the spirit of James and John? who as much need our Lord's rebuke, and who would be as much surprised at that rebuke being given? There is no one thicker cloak beneath which human passions hide themselves, than that of religious zeal—zeal for Christ's truth, Christ's cause, Christ's kingdom. Once let a man believe (a belief for which he may have much good reason, for it is not spurious but real zeal that we are now speaking of)—once let a man believe that a true and ardent attachment to Christ, a true and ardent zeal to promote the honour of his name, the interests of his kingdom, glows within him, and it is perfectly astonishing to what extent the consciousness of this may delude him—shut his eye from seeing, his heart from feeling—that, under the specious guise of such love and

zeal, he is harbouring and indulging some of the meanest and darkest passions of our nature—wounded pride, irritation at opposition, combativeness, the sheer love of fighting, of having an adversary of some kind to grapple with and overcome, personal hatred, the deep thirst to be avenged. These, and suchlike passions, did they not, in the days gone by, rankle in the breasts of persecutors and controversialists?—of men who claimed to be animated in all they said and did by a supreme regard to the honour of their Heavenly Master? These, and suchlike passions, do they not rankle still in the hearts of many, now that the hand of the persecutor has, to so great an extent, been tied up, and the pen of the controversialist restrained?—prompting still the uncharitable judgment, the spiteful remark, the harsh and cruel treatment. Christ's holy character and noble cause may have insults offered, deep injuries done to them; but let us be assured that it is not by getting angry at those who are guilty of such conduct, not by maligning their character, not by the visitation of pains and penalties of any kind upon them, that these in-

sults and injuries are to be avenged; no, but by forbearance and gentleness, and love and pity—by feeling and acting towards all such men as our blessed Lord and Master felt and acted towards the inhabitants of that Samaritan village.

Perhaps it was the gentle but firm manner in which Jesus rebuked the proposal of the two disciples—telling them how ignorant they were of the true state of their own hearts—that led the Evangelist to introduce here the narrative of those cases in which our Lord dealt with other moods and tempers of the human spirit which produce often the same self-ignorance, and too often seriously interfere with a faithful following of Christ. One man comes—a type of the hasty, the impetuous, the inconsiderate—and, volunteering discipleship, he proclaims, "Lord, I will follow whithersoever thou goest." Boastful, self-ignorant, self-confident, he has not stopped to think what following of Jesus means, or whither it will carry him—unprepared for the difficulties and trials of that discipleship which he is in such haste to take on. The quieting reply, "Foxes have holes, and birds of

the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head," sends him back to reflect somewhat more intelligently and deeply on what his offer and promise imply. Another is asked by Christ himself to follow him; but he says, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father:" a type of the depressed, the melancholic—of those whom the very griefs and sorrows of this life and the sad duties to which these call them stand as a barrier between them and the services, the sacrifices, the comforts and consolations of the faith. Such need to be taught that there is a duty above that of self-indulgence in any human grief; and so to this man the Lord's peremptory reply is, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." A third man asks, that before obeying the Saviour's call, he might be allowed first to go and bid his friends and relatives farewell: a very natural request—one in which we should imagine there was little that was wrong; but the Searcher of all hearts sees that there is a hankering here after the old familiar way of living—a reluctance of some kind in some degree to take the new yoke on; and so the

warning is conveyed to him in the words, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." So varied was the spirit in which men approached Jesus, in whom some readiness to follow him appeared, so varied was the manner in which our Lord dealt with such, suiting himself to each particular case with a nicety of adjustment of which in our ignorance we are but imperfect judges, but enabling us to gather from the whole that it is a deliberate, a cheerful, an entire and unconditional surrender of the heart and life that Jesus asks from all who would be truly and for ever his.

Rejected by the Samaritans, Jesus turned to another village and chose another route to Jerusalem, in all likelihood the well-known and most frequented one leading through Peræa, on the east side of the Jordan. In prosecuting this journey, he "appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come." Our Lord had gathered around him in passing from Capernaum to Samaria almost the entire body of

his Galilean discipleship. It could scarcely furnish more men than were sent forth on this important mission. Every available disciple of suitable age and character was enlisted in the service. It can scarcely be imagined that they were employed for no other purpose than to provide suitable accommodation beforehand for their Master. Theirs was a higher and far more important errand. For the wisest reasons Jesus had hitherto avoided any public proclamation of his Messiahship. He had left it to his words and deeds to tell the people who and what he was. He had, not long before this time, charged his apostles "that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ."[1] But the time had come for his throwing aside this reserve—for seeking rather than shunning publicity—for letting all men know, not only that the kingdom had come, but that he, the head of that kingdom, the Christ, the Son of David, the king of Israel, was in the midst of them. Before his departure from among them, the Israelitish nation was to have this proclaimed through all its borders.

[1] Matt. xvi. 20.

This was to be the peculiar distinction of his last journeyings towards the Holy City—that all along upon their course his Messianic character should be publicly proclaimed, that so a last opportunity for receiving or rejecting him might be afforded. And how could this have been better effected than by the mission of the seventy? By the advance of so many men two by two before him, the greatest publicity must have been given to all his movements. In every place and city the voice of his forerunners would summon forth the people to be waiting his approach. The deputies themselves could scarcely fail to feel how urgent and important the duty was which was committed to their hands. Summoning them around him before he sent them forth, Jesus addressed to them instructions almost identical with those addressed to the twelve at the time of their inauguration as his apostles. The address to the twelve, as reported by St. Matthew (chap. x.), was longer, bore more of the character of an induction to a permanent office, carried in it allusions to duties to be done, persecutions to be endured, promises to be fulfilled, in times that

were to follow the removal of the Lord; but so far as that first short mission of the twelve and this mission of the seventy were concerned, the instructions were almost literally the same. Both were to go forth in the same character, vested with the same powers, to discharge the same office in the same way; to the rejecters and despisers of both the same guilt was attached, and upon them the same woes were denounced. We notice, indeed, these slight differences: that the prohibition laid upon the twelve not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor into any city of the Samaritans, is now withdrawn, and that the gift of miraculous power is seemingly more limited as committed to the seventy, being restricted nominally to the healing of the sick. But these scarcely affect the question when comparison is made between the commissions given to the twelve and to the seventy, as employed respectively on the two temporary missions on which Jesus sent them forth. The result of that comparison is, that no real distinction of any importance can be drawn between the two. Does this not serve, when duly weighed, to stamp, with far greater signifi-

cance than is ordinarily attached to it, the mission of the seventy—raising it to the same platform with that of the apostles? It is quite true that the apostles were to be apostles for life, and the seventy were to have no permanent standing or office of any kind in the Church. But it is equally true that in their distinctively apostolic character and office the twelve were to have—indeed, could have—no successors. If, then, the commission and the directions given to them are to be taken as guides to those who were afterwards to hold office in the Church, the commission and directions given to the seventy may equally be regarded as given for the guidance of the membership of the Church at large; this, the great, the abiding lesson that their employment by Jesus carries with it—that it is not to ministers or ordained officers of the Church alone that the duty pertains of spreading abroad amongst those around them the knowledge of Christ. To the whole Church of the living God, to each individual member thereof, the great commission comes, "Go thou and make the Saviour known." As the Father sent him, Jesus sends all who own and love him on the same

errand of mercy. Originally the Church of Christ was one large company of missionaries of the cross, each member feeling that to him a portion —differing it may be largely both in kind and sphere from that assigned to others, but still a portion—of the great task of evangelizing the world was committed; and it shall be just in proportion as the community of the faithful, through all its parts, in all its members, comes to recognise this to be its function, and attempts to execute it, that the expansive power that once belonged to it will return to it again, and not so much by organized societies or the work of paid deputies, as by the living power of individual pity, sympathy, and love, spirit after spirit will be drawn into the fold of our Redeemer, and his kingdom be enlarged upon the earth.

Where the seventy went,—into what places and cities they entered, how they were received, what spiritual good was effected by them,—all this is hidden from our view. The sole brief record of the result of their labours is what is told us about their return. They came back rejoicing. One thing especially had struck them,

and of this only they make mention—that, though they had not been told of it beforehand, the very devils had been subject unto them through their Master's name. They were pleased, perhaps somewhat proud, that what nine of the Lord's own apostles had failed in doing they had done. Jesus tells them that his eye had been on them in their progress—that he had seen what they could not see—how the powers of the invisible world had been moved, and Satan had fallen as lightning from heaven. He tells them that it was no temporary power this with which they had been invested—that instead of being diminished, it would afterwards be enlarged till it covered and brought beneath its sway all the power of the enemy. But there was a warning he had to give them. He saw that their minds and hearts were too much occupied by the mere exercise of power—by the most striking and tangible results of the exercise of that power. Knowing how faithless an index what is done by any agent is of what that agent himself is, of his real worth and value in the sight of God, he checks so far their joy by saying, "Notwith-

standing, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." There is a book of remembrance in the heavens, the Lamb's book of life, in which the names of all his true and faithful followers are written. It may be a great thing to have one's name inscribed in large, enduring letters in the roll of those who have done great things for Christ and for Christ's cause upon this earth; but that earthly register does not correspond with the one that is kept above. There are names to be found in the one that would not be met with in the other. There are names which shine bright in the one that appear but faintly luminous in the other. There are names that have never been entered in the one that beam forth with a heavenly brilliance in the other. The time comes when over the one the waters of oblivion shall pass, and its records be all wiped away. The time shall never come when the names that shall at last be found written in the other shall be blotted out.

The joy of the disciples had an impure earthly element in it which needed correction. No such

element was in the joy which the intelligence that the seventy brought with them kindled in the Saviour's breast. He was the man of sorrows; a load of inward unearthly grief lay heavy upon his heart. But out of that very grief—the grief that he endured for the sinful world he came to save—there broke a joy—the purest, the sublimest, the most blissful—that felt by him when he saw that the great ends of his mission were being accomplished, and that the things belonging to their eternal peace were being revealed to the souls of men. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Once before Jesus had offered up the same thanksgiving, in the same words, to the Father. We sought then to enter a little into its meaning.[1] Now from the very repetition of it let us learn how fixed the order is, and how grateful we should be that it is so—that it is to the simple,

[1] See "Ministry in Galilee," p. 125 *seq.*

the humble, the teachable, the childlike in heart and spirit, that the blessed revelation cometh.

Blessed we have called it, taking the epithet from Christ's own lips; for after he had offered up that thanksgiving to his Father, he turned to his disciples and said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see: for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

One closing remark upon the position in the spiritual kingdom here tacitly assumed or openly claimed by Christ. He prefaced his instructions to the seventy by saying, "The harvest truly is great, and the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into his harvest." Who was the Lord of the harvest, to whom these prayers of his disciples were to be addressed? Does he not tell them when he himself immediately thereafter proceeds to send forth some labourers, instructing them how the work in the great harvest field was to be carried on? Parting from

Galilee he casts a lingering glance behind upon its towns and villages—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Who shall explain to us wherein the exceeding privileges of these cities consisted, and wherein their exceeding guilt? Who shall vindicate the sentence that Jesus passed, the woes that he denounced upon them, if he was not the Son of God, into whose hands the judgment of the earth hath been committed? "I beheld," said Jesus, "Satan like lightning fall from heaven." Was the vision a true one? If so, what kind of eye was it that saw it? "All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." With what approach to truth or to propriety could language like this be used by any human, any created being? So is it continually here and there along the track of his earthly sojourn, the hidden glory bursts through the veil that covers it, and in the full majesty of the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-judging, all-directing One—Jesus of Nazareth presents himself to the eye of faith.

IX.

OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN PERÆA.[1]

THE Feast of Tabernacles, at which St. John tells us that Jesus was present, was held in the end of October. The succeeding Passover, at which our Lord was crucified, occurred in the beginning of April. Between the two there intervened five months. Had we depended alone upon the information given us by the first two Evangelists, we should have known nothing of what happened in this interval beyond the fact that, when his ministry in Galilee was over, Christ went up to Jerusalem to die there. They tell us of two or three incidents which occurred at the close of this last journey, but leave us altogether in the dark as to any preceding visit to Jerusalem or journeyings and labours in any other districts of the land. True to his particular

[1] Luke ix. 51 to Luke xviii. 16.

object of giving us the details of Christ's ministry in Judea, St. John enables us so far to fill up this blank as to insert:—(1.) The appearance at the Feast of Tabernacles; (2.) The appearance at the Feast of Dedication, held in the latter end of December; (3.) A retirement immediately after the feast to Peræa, the region beyond the Jordan; (4.) A summons back to Bethany upon the occasion of the death of Lazarus; (5.) A retreat to "a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim;" and (6.) A coming up to Bethany and Jerusalem six days before the Passover. These cover, however, but a small portion of the five months. At the first of the two feasts Jesus was not more than four or five—at the second, not more than eight—days in Jerusalem. His stay at Bethany, when he came to raise Lazarus from the dead, was cut short by the conspiracy to put him to death. Not more than a fortnight out of the five months is thus accounted for as having been passed in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood. Where, then, was spent the remaining portion of the time? The Gospel of St. Luke—and it alone—enables us to answer these

questions. There is a large section of this Gospel —from the close of the 9th to near the middle of the 18th chapter—which is occupied with this period, and which stands by itself, having nothing parallel to it in any other of the Evangelists. This section commences with the words, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him."[1] St. Matthew describes what is obviously the same event—our Lord's farewell to Galilee—in these words: "And it came to pass, that, when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan."[2] And similarly St. Mark, of the same movement, says, "And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan."[3] In the same chapters, and but a few verses after those in which these announcements are made, both St. Matthew and St. Mark relate the incident of little children having been

[1] Luke ix. 51, 52. [2] Matt. xix. 1. [3] Mark x. 1.

brought to Jesus. But in the Gospel of St. Luke, the record of this incident, instead of following so closely upon the notice of the departure from Galilee, does not come in till the close of the entire section already alluded to—so many as eight chapters intervening. From that point the three narratives become again coincident, and run on together. We have thus so much, then, as a third part of the entire narrative of St. Luke, and that continuous—to which, so far as the sequence of the story goes, there is nothing that corresponds in any of the other Gospels.

In this part of St. Luke's Gospel there are so few notices of time and place, that had we it alone before us, our natural conclusion would be that it described continuously the different stages of one long journey from Galilee up through Peræa to Jerusalem. Taking it, however, in connexion with the information supplied to us by St. John, we become convinced that it includes all the journeyings to and fro which took place between the time when Jesus finally left Galilee to the time when he was approaching Jericho, on going up to his last Passover. But

how are we to distribute the narrative so as to make its different parts fit in with the different visits to Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, related by St. John? Our first idea here would be to start with identifying the final departure from Galilee, described by St. Luke, with the going up to the Feast of Tabernacles, as related by St. John. Looking, however, somewhat more closely at the two narratives, we are persuaded that they do not refer to the same journey. In the one, public messengers were sent before Christ's face to proclaim and prepare for his approach; in the other, he went up, "not openly, but, as it were, in secret." The one was slow, prolonged by a large circuit through many towns and villages; the other was rapid—Jesus waited behind till all his brethren and friends had departed, and then suddenly appeared at Jerusalem in the midst of the feast. Did Jesus then return to Galilee immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles, and was it in the course of the two months that elapsed between the two festivals that the first part of the journey described by St. Luke was undertaken; or was it not till after the Feast of

Dedication that the last visit to Galilee and the final departure from it took place? The absolute silence of St. John as to any such return to Galilee, and the unbroken continuity of his account of what happened at the two Feasts, seem to militate against the former of these suppositions. We remember, however, that such silence is not peculiar to this case—that there is a similar instance of a visit paid to Galilee between the time of the occurrences, reported respectively in the 5th and 6th chapters of St. John's Gospel, of which not the slightest trace is to be discovered there. We remember that if Jesus did remain in Judea between the Feasts, it must have been in concealment, for we are told of this very period, that he would not walk in Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him.[1] We remember that St John speaks of his going to Peræa after the Feast of Dedication, as if it were one following upon another that had recently preceded it, "He went away again beyond Jordan."[2] We reflect besides that if it were not till the beginning of January that the journey

[1] John vii. 1. [2] John x. 40.

from Galilee commenced, there would be but little room for all the occurrences detailed in these eight chapters of St. Luke's Gospel; and we accept it as being much the more likely thing that Jesus did retire from Judea to Galilee instantly after the close of the Feast of Tabernacles, and it was then that the series of incidents commenced, the sole record of which is preserved to us by the third Evangelist. This, of course, implies that we break down the portion of his narrative devoted to the journeys to Jerusalem into portions corresponding with the interval between the two festivals, and those between the latter of these and the visit to Bethany. This might plausibly enough be done by fixing upon what appears to be something like one break in the narrative, occurring at chap. xiii. 22, and something like another at chap. xvii. 11. Without resting much upon this, let us (distribute its parts as we may) take the whole account contained in these eight chapters of St. Luke, as descriptive of a period of our Lord's life and ministry, which otherwise would have been an utter blank, as telling us what happened away

both from Galilee and Judea during the five months that immediately preceded the crucifixion.

Evidently the chief scene or theatre of our Lord's labours throughout the period was in the region east of the Jordan. Departing from Capernaum—turned aside by the inhabitants of the Samaritan village—he passed along the borders of Galilee and Samaria, crossed the Jordan at the ford of Bethshean, entering the southern part of the populous Decapolis, passing by Jabesh-Gilead, penetrating inward perhaps as far as Jerash, whose wonderful ruins attest its wealth and splendour; then turning southward towards Jerusalem, crossing the Jabbok, pausing at Mahanaim, where Jacob had his long night-struggle; climbing or skirting those heights and forests of Gilead to which, when driven from Jerusalem by an ungrateful son, David retreated, and which now was furnishing a like refuge to the Son and Lord of David in a similar but still sadder extremity. Much of this country must have been new to Jesus. He may once or twice have taken the ordinary route along the eastern bank of the Jordan, but it

is not at all likely that he had ever before gone so deep into or passed so leisurely through this district. Certainly he had never visited it in the same style or manner. He came among this new population with all the prestige of his great Galilean name. He came sending messengers before his face—in all likelihood the seventy expending their brief but ardent activities upon this virgin soil. He came as he had come at first to the Galileans, at the opening of his ministry, among whom many of the notices of what occurred here strikingly remind us, for we are distinctly told when he came into the "coasts beyond Jordan he went through the cities and villages," and "great multitudes followed him, and he healed them," and "the people resorted to him, and gathered thick together; and as he was wont, he taught them." "And when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say to his disciples."[1] Here we have all the excitements, and the gatherings, and the

[1] Luke xiii. 22; Matt. xix. 2; Mark x. 1; Luke xi. 29, 42; xii. 1.

manifold healings which attended the earlier part of the ministry in Galilee. The two communities were similarly situated, each remote from metropolitan influence, more open to new ideas and influences than the residents in Jerusalem. The instrumentality brought to bear upon them in the presence of Jesus and his disciples, in the proclamation of the advent of the kingdom, in the working of all manner of cures upon the diseased among them, was the same. Are we surprised at it, that so many of the very scenes enacted at first in Galilee should be enacted over again in Peræa, and that, exactly similar occasions having arisen, the same discourses should be repeated? that once more we should hear the same accusation brought against Jesus when he cast out devils that he did so by Beelzebub, and that against this accusation we should hear from his lips the same defence?[1] that once more, as frequently before, there should be a seeking of some sign from heaven, and a telling again the evil generation that so sought after it that no sign but that of Jonas the prophet should be given? that once

[1] Matt. xii. 24; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 14.

more, when asked by the disciples to teach them to pray, the Lord should have repeated the prayer he had recited in the Sermon on the Mount? that upon another and equally suitable occasion, about half of that sermon should now be re-delivered? that we should have in this period two cases of healing on the Sabbath, exciting the same hostility, that hostility in turn rebuked by the employment of the same arguments and illustrations? These and other resemblances are not surprising, and yet it is the very discernment of them which has perplexed many so much, that (in direct opposition to the expressed purpose of the Gospel as announced in its opening sentence) they have been tempted to think that, in violation of all chronological order, St. Luke has imported into what bears to be an account of what occurred after the departure from Galilee many of the incidents and discourses of the preceding ministry in Galilee. Instead, however, of our being perplexed at finding these resemblances or coincidences, knowing as we do otherwise, that it was the practice of our Saviour to reiterate (it is likely very often) the mightiest of his sayings,

they are such as we should have expected when once we come to understand precisely the peculiarities of this brief Peræan ministry. But whilst these coincidences as to events, and repetitions as to discourses, do occur, there occur along with them, mixed up inseparably with them, many things both in the spirit and actions of Christ appropriate exclusively to this particular epoch of his life. No allusions to the time or manner of his own death, no reference to the departure and his return, no pressing upon his disciples of the great duty of waiting and watching for his second advent, no prophecies of the approaching overturn of the Jewish economy, came from the lips of Jesus during his sojourn in Galilee. It was not till the time of his transfiguration that he began to speak of such matters privately to his disciples, and even then it was with bated breath. But now all the reasons for reserve are nearly, if not entirely gone. Jesus has set his face to go up to Jerusalem to die. He waits and works only a little longer in this remote region beyond Jordan, till the set time has come. Nothing that he can say or do here can have

much effect in hastening or retarding the day of his decease. He may give free expression to those thoughts and sentiments which, now that it is drawing near, must be gathering often around the great event. And he may also safely draw aside, at least partially, the veil which hides the future, concealing at once the awful doom impending over Jerusalem, and his own speedy return to judge the nation that had rejected him. And this is what we now find him doing. Herod, under whose jurisdiction he still was in Peræa, had got alarmed. Fearing the people too much, having burden enough to bear from the beheading of the Baptist, he had no real intention to stretch out his hand to slay Jesus; but it annoyed him to find this new excitement breaking out in another part of his territories, and he got some willing emissaries among the Pharisees to go to Jesus, and to say, as if from private information, "Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee. And Jesus said, Go ye and tell that fox"—who thinks so cunningly by working upon my fears to get rid of me before my time—"Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day

and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." I have quoted especially these words, the most memorable of which were repeated afterwards, as they present a very accurate reflection of the peculiar mood of our Lord's mind, and the peculiar tone and texture of his ministry at this period.

First, There was a shortness, a decisiveness, a strength of utterance in the message sent to Herod, which belongs to all Christ's sayings of this period, whether addressed to friends or foes. His instructions, counsels, warnings to his own disciples, he expressed in the briefest, most emphatic terms.

Was he speaking to them of faith, he said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye would say to this sycamore-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." Was he inculcating humility, he said, "Which of you having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do." Was he warning them against covetousness, he did it in the story of the rich man who, as he was making all his plans about throwing down his barns and building greater ones, had the words addressed to him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

Was he inculcating the necessity of self-denial, an entire surrender of the heart and life to him, he did it by turning to the multitude that followed him, and saying, "If any come to me, and hate not his father and his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."[1]

There was curtness even in our Lord's dealings with those who, influenced with no hostile feeling, came to him with needless and impertinent inquiries. "Master," said one of the company, "speak to my brother that he may divide the inheritance with me. And he said, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" "There were present some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." It was not enough to tell them that they were wrong

[1] Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33 compared with Matthew x. 37, 38. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that loveth wife or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me."

if they imagined that these men were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things. They must have it also there told to them, "I say unto you, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Marked especially by the same feature was our Lord's treatment of his enemies, the Pharisees. Their hostility to him had now reached its height. "They began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak many things; laying wait for him and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him," and "as they heard all these things they derided him."[1] He gave them indeed good reason to be provoked. One of them invited him to dinner, and he went in and sat down to meat. The custom, whether expressed or not, that he had not first washed before dinner, gave Jesus the fit opportunity, and in terms very different from any he had employed in Galilee, he denounced the whole body to which his host belonged. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools! Woe unto you, Scribes and

[1] Luke xi. 53, 54; xvi. 14.

Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." The first notes thus sounded of that terrible denunciation that rung through the Courts of the Temple as our Lord turned to take his last farewell of them, and of his enemies.

Corresponding with this manner of speaking was our Lord's manner of action at this time. The three conspicuous miracles of this period were the two Sabbath cures and the healing of the ten lepers. Like all the others of the same class, the two former were spontaneous on Christ's part, wrought by him of his own free movement, and not upon any application or appeal. In a synagogue one Sabbath day he saw a woman that for eighteen years had been bowed together, and could in no way lift herself up. And when he saw her, "he said unto the woman, Thou art loosed from thine infirmity, and he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." Invited on another Sabbath-day to sup with one of the chief Pharisees, as he entered he saw before him a man which had the dropsy, brought there perhaps on purpose to see

what he would do. Turning to the assembled guests, Jesus put a single question to them, more direct than any he had put in Galilee. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" They said nothing, and he "took the man and healed him, and let him go." Entering into a certain village, he saw before him ten lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." He said to them as soon as he saw them, "Go, show yourselves unto the priests." 'You have what you ask; you are cured already. Go, do what the cured are required by your law to do.' A few words are spoken at a distance, and all the men are at once healed. Is there not a quick promptitude displayed in all these cases, as if the actor had no words or time to spare?

But, secondly, our Lord's thoughts were fixed much at this time upon the future—his own future and that of those around him. His chief work of teaching and healing was over. True, he was teaching and healing still, but it was by the way. All was done as by one that was on a journey—who had a great goal before him,

upon which his eye was intently fixed. With singular minuteness of perspective, the dark close of his own earthly existence now rose up before him. "Behold," he said at its close, "we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death."[1] "I have a baptism to be baptized with," he said at the beginning of the period, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"[2] "And the third day he shall rise again." But beyond the days, whether of his own death or of his resurrection, that other day of his second coming now for the first time is spoken of. He is pressing upon his disciples the great duty of taking no undue thought for the future—using the same terms and employing the same images as he had in the Sermon on the Mount; but he goes now a step further than he had done then, closing all by saying, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves

[1] Luke xviii. 31.33. [2] Luke xii. 50.

like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. . . . Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."[1] Still in darkness as to the true nature of the kingdom of God, irritated, it may have been, that after the announcement that it had come so little should be said about it, so few tokens of its presence should appear, the Pharisees demanded of him when the kingdom of God should come. He told them that they were looking for it in an altogether wrong direction. "The kingdom of God," he said, "cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you,"—for them, for us, for all men, one of the most important lessons that ever could be taught —that God's true spiritual kingdom is in nothing outward, but lies in the inward state and condition of the soul. Nevertheless, there was to be much outward and visible enough, much connected

[1] Luke xii. 35, 36, 37, 40.

with that kingdom and his own lordship over it, of which these Pharisees were little dreaming, and which was destined to break upon them and upon their children with all the terror of a terrible surprise. This was in his thoughts when, after having corrected the error of the Pharisees as to the nature of the kingdom, he turned to his disciples and said to them, "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say unto you, See here! or, See there! go not after them, nor follow them; for as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot . . . thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed,"—our Lord enlarging upon this topic till in what he said upon this occasion you have the first rough sketch of that grand and awful picture presented in his last discourse to

the apostles upon the ridge of Mount Olivet, preserved in Matt. xxiv.

That section of our Lord's life and labours, of which a short sketch has been presented, has been greatly overlooked—thrown, in fact, into the distance and obscurity which hangs over the region in which it was enacted. A careful study will guide to the conviction that in it Christ occupied a position intermediate between the one assumed in Galilee and the one taken up by him at Jerusalem in the days that immediately preceded his crucifixion.

X.

THE PARABLES OF THE PERÆAN MINISTRY.

DURING that ministry in Peræa whose course and character we have traced, our Lord delivered not fewer than ten parables—as many within these five months as in the two preceding years —a third of all that have been recorded as coming from his lips. The simple recital of them will satisfy you how fertile in this respect this period was, whilst a few rapid glances at the occasions which suggested some of them, and at their general drift and meaning, may help to confirm the representation already given of the peculiar features by which that stage in our Lord's life stands marked. We have before us here the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the Barren Fig-tree, the Great Supper, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, the Prodigal Son, the Provident Steward, Dives and

Lazarus, the Unjust Judge, the Pharisee and the Publican.

The first of these was given as an answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" and, as inculcating the lesson of a broad and unsectarian charity, might, with almost equal propriety, have been spoken at any time in the course of our Lord's ministry. It gives, however, an additional point and force to the leading incident of the story, when we think of it as delivered a few days after our Lord himself had received such treatment at the hands of the Samaritans as might have restrained him,—had he not been himself the perfect example of the charity he inculcated,—from making a Samaritan the hero of the tale.

The second sprung from an application made to Jesus, the manner of whose treatment merits our particular regard. One of two brothers, both of whom appear to have been present on the occasion, said to him, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." A request not likely to have been made till Christ's fairness and fearlessness, in recoil from

all falsehood and injustice, had been openly manifested and generally recognised—a request, however, grounded upon a total misconception of the nature and objects of his ministry. The dispute that had taken place between the two brothers was one for the law of the country to settle. For Christ to have interfered in such a case—to have pronounced any judgment on either side, would have been tantamount to an assumption on his part of the office of the civil magistrate. This Jesus promptly and peremptorily refused. "Man," said he, "who made me a judge over you?" More than once was Christ tempted to enter upon the proper and peculiar province of the judge. More than once were certain difficult legal and political cases and questions submitted to him for decision, but he always, in the most marked and decisive manner, refused to entertain them. With the existing government and institutions of the country—with the ordinary administration of its laws—he never did and never would interfere. You can lay your hand upon no one law—upon no one practice, having reference purely to man's temporal estate, which

had the sanction of the public authorities, that Jesus condemned or refused to comply with. No doubt there was great tyranny being practised, there were unjust laws, iniquitous institutions in operation, but he did not take it upon him to expose, much less to resist them. For the guidance of men in all the different relations in which they can be placed to one another he announced and expounded the great and broad, eternal and immutable, principles of justice and of mercy. But with the application of these principles to particular cases he did not intermeddle. He carefully and deliberately avoided such intermeddling. It is possible indeed that the demand made upon him in the instance now before us, may not have been for any authoritative decision upon a matter that fell properly to be determined by the legal tribunals. Had the claim been one that could be made good at law, it is not so likely that Jesus would have been appealed to in the matter. The object of the petitioner may simply have been to get Christ to act as an umpire or arbitrator in a dispute which the letter of the law might have regulated in one way, and

the principle of equity in another. But neither in that character would Jesus interfere. "Man, who made me a divider over you?" He would not mix himself up with this or any other family dispute about property. Willing as he was to earn for himself the blessedness of the peace-maker, he was not prepared to try and earn it in this way. It was no part of his office, as head of that great spiritual kingdom which he came to establish upon the earth, to act as arbitrator between such conflicting claims as these two brothers might present. To set up the kingdom of righteousness and peace and love in both their hearts—that was his office. Let that be done; then, without either lawsuit or arbitration, the brothers could settle the matter between themselves. But so long as that was not done—so long as either one or both of these brothers was acting in the pure spirit of selfishness—there was no proper room or opportunity for Jesus to interfere; nor would interposition, even if he had ventured on it, have realized any of those ends which his great mission to our earth was intended to accomplish.

The example of non-intervention thus given by Christ, rightly interpreted, has a wide range. It applies to disputes between kings and subjects, masters and servants, employers and employed. These in the form that they ordinarily assume, it is not the office of Jesus to determine. That he who rules over men should be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord; that we should obey them that rule over us, living a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty—this he proclaims, but he does not determine what just ruling is, nor what the limits of obedience are, nor how, in any case of conflict, the right adjustment is to be made between the prerogatives of the crown and the liberties of the subject; and if ever discord should arise between oppressive rulers and exacting subjects who, with equal pride, equal selfishness, equal ambition, try the one to keep and the other to grasp as much power as possible, in such a struggle Christianity, if true to her own spirit and to her founder's example, stands aloof, refusing to take either side.

"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." Such is the rule that Chris-

tianity lays down; but what exactly, in any particular case, would be the just and equal thing to do—what would be the proper wage for the master to offer, and the servant to receive—she leaves that to be adjusted between masters and servants, according to the varying circumstances by which the wages of all kinds of labour must be regulated. It has been made a question whether, in our great manufacturing cities, capital gives to labour its fair share of the profits. One can conceive that question raised by the employed as against their employers, in the spirit of a purely selfish and aggressive discontent; and that, so raised, it might provoke and lead on to open collision between the two. Here, again, in a struggle, originating thus, and carried on in such a spirit, Christianity refuses to take a part. She would that employers should be more liberal, more humane, more tenderly considerate, not only of the wants, but of the feelings of those by the labour of whose hands it is that their wealth is created. She would that the employed should be less selfish, less envious, less irritable—more contented. It is not by a clashing of opposing

interests, but by a rivalry of just and generous sentiments on either side, that she would keep the balance even—the only way of doing so productive of lasting good.

After correcting the error into which the applicant to him had fallen,—as though the settlement of legal questions, or family disputes about the division of estates, lay within his province,—Jesus took advantage of the opportunity to expose and rebuke the principle which probably actuated both brothers, the one to withhold and the other to demand. Turning to the general audience by which he was surrounded, he said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." The word here rendered "covetousness" is a peculiar and very expressive one; it means the spirit of greed—that ever restless, ever craving, ever unsatisfied spirit, which, whatever a man has, is ever wanting more, and the more he gets still thirsts for more. A passion which has a strange history; often of honest enough birth—the child of forethought, but changing its character rapidly with its growth—getting prematurely blind—losing sight of the end in the means—till wealth

is loved and sought and grasped and hoarded, not for the advantages it confers, the enjoyment it purchases, but simply for itself—to gratify that lust of possession which has seized upon the soul, and makes it all its own. It was to warn against the entrance and spread and power of this passion that Jesus spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Beyond the circumstance already noted, that the request which suggested it was one more appropriate to a late than to an early period of

our Lord's ministry, we have nothing in the parable, any more than in that of the Good Samaritan, which specially connects it with the ministry in Peræa. It is different with the two that come next in order—that of the Barren Fig-tree and of the Great Supper.

Some who were present once told Jesus of those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He told them, in reply, of the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, repeating, as he did so, the warning, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." We miss the full force of the prophetic knell thus sounded in their ears, in consequence of the word "likewise" being often used by us as equivalent to "also," or "as well." The intimation, as given by Jesus, was that they would perish in the same manner. The work done by the Roman sword, the deaths caused by a single falling tower, were brought before the mind of Jesus; and instantly he thinks of the wider sweep of that sword, and the falling of all the towers and battlements of Jerusalem; and when that terrible calamity (of which we have here the first obscure hint or pro-

phecy that came from the lips of Jesus) descended upon the Jewish people, then to the very letter were his words fulfilled, as thousands fell beneath the stroke of the Roman sabres—slain, as the Galileans were, in the midst of their Passover sacrifices—and multitudes were crushed to death beneath the falling ruins of their beloved Jerusalem. None but Christ himself, none of those who listened for the first time to these warning words, could tell to what they pointed. Forty years were to intervene before the impending doom came to be executed upon the devoted city. No sign or token of its approach was visible. Those around him, some of whom were to witness and to share in the calamity, were living in security, not knowing how rapidly the period of forbearance was running out, not knowing that the time then present was but for them a season of respite. It was to indicate how false that feeling of security was, to give them the true key to the Lord's present dealings with them as a people, that Jesus told them of a fig-tree planted in a vineyard, to which for three successive years the owner of the vineyard had come seeking

fruit, and finding none; turning to the dresser of the vineyard, and saying, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" And the dresser of the vineyard said to him, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." And there, at the point of the respite sought and granted, the action of the parable ceases. Did the year of grace go by in vain? Was all the fresh labour of the dresser fruitless? Was the tree at last cut down? All about this the parable leaves untold. It had been the image of the end, as it crossed the Saviour's thoughts, that had suggested the parable; but the time had not yet come for his going further in the history of the tree than the telling that its last year of trial had arrived, and that if it remained fruitless it was to be cut down. The story of the tree was, in fact, a prophetic allegory, meant to represent the state and prospects of the Jewish people, for whom so much had been done in the years that were past, and so much more in the year then present: the story stopping abruptly at the very stage which was then being described

—not without an ominous foreshadowing of the dark doom in reserve for impenitent Israel—the Israel that refused to benefit by all the care and the toil that Jesus had lavished on it. It is, of course, not only easy, but altogether legitimate and beneficial, for the broader purposes of Christian teaching, to detach this parable from its primary connexions and its immediate objects; but, as it ever should be the first aim in reading any of our Lord's sayings to understand their significance as at first uttered, in this instance we are left in no doubt or uncertainty that it was the generation of the Jews then living, then upon probation, then in the last stage of their trial—that the fig-tree of the parable, in the first instance, was intended to represent. Regarded so, how singularly appropriate to the time of its delivery, in its form and structure, does the parable appear! It is the first of a series of allegorical prophecies, in which the whole after-history of the people and age, to which Jesus may be said to have himself belonged, stands portrayed. Never before had any hint of the outward or historical issues of his advent, so far

as the generation which rejected him was concerned, dropped from the lips of Jesus. Such allusion, we may say with reverence, would have been mistimed had it been made earlier. It was suitable that the great trial upon which his mission to them put that generation should be somewhat advanced, be drawing near its close, before the judicial visitations, consequent upon its treatment of the Messiah, should be declared. And here, in the narrative of St. Luke, the prophetic announcement meets us, as made for the first time after our Lord's labours in Galilee are over, and he is waiting to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified; and, as the first hint of the kind given, it is, as was fitting, brief and limited in its range, throwing a clear beam of light upon the time then present, leaving the future enveloped with a threatening gloom.

The same things are true of the parable that comes next in order in the pages of St. Luke. It carries the story of the future a little further on; but it, too, stops abruptly. A great supper is made, to which many had been invited. The servant is sent out to say to them that were

bidden, "Come, for all things are now ready." With one consent, but giving different reasons, they all excuse themselves. The servants are sent out first to the streets and lanes of the city, then to the highways and hedges, to bring others in, that the table may be filled. The narrative closes with the emphatic utterance of the giver of the feast—"For I say unto you, that none of these men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." Here, in the first invited guests, we at once recognise the Jews, or rather that section of them which stood represented by their lawyers and Pharisees, among whom Jesus was at the time sitting. They had had the invitation long in their hands, and professed to have accepted it; but when the time came, and the call came from the lips of Jesus to enter the kingdom, to partake of the prepared supper, they all, with one consent, had made excuse. And they were to reap this as the fruit of their doing so—that the poor, the lame, the halt, the blind, the wanderers of the highways and hedges, were to be brought in, and they were to be excluded. Of this result the parable gives a clear enough foreshadowing;

but it does not actually reveal the issue. It stops with the second mission of the servants and the declaration of a fixed purpose on the part of the giver of the entertainment: but it does not describe the supper itself, nor tell how the last errand of the servant prospered, nor how the fixed resolution of the master of the house to exclude was carried out. Over these it leaves the same obscurity hanging, that in the preceding parable was left hanging over the cutting down of the tree. There is a step taken in advance. Beyond the rejection of the Jews, we have the gathering in of the Gentiles in their stead alluded to, but obviously the main purpose of the parable as indicated by the point at which it stops and the last speech of the master of the house, which is left sounding in our ears, is to proclaim that those who had rejected the first invitation that Christ had brought should, in their turn, be themselves rejected of him. Here, then, we have another parable fitting in with the former, and in common with it perfectly harmonizing with that particular epoch at which St. Luke represents it as having been delivered.

The parable of the Great Supper was spoken at table, in the house of a chief Pharisee, in the midst of a company of Pharisees and lawyers. Soon afterwards, Jesus appears to us in the centre of a very different circle. "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners to hear him." Jesus welcomed them with joy, devoted himself with the readiest zeal to their instruction. The Pharisees who were present were offended at what they had noted or had been told about the familiarity of his intercourse with these publicans and sinners; his acceptance of their invitations; his permitting them to use freedom even with his person. "And they murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The Pharisees in Galilee had done the same thing; and that St. Luke, in the fifteenth chapter, is not referring to the same incident that St. Matthew, in his ninth chapter, has recorded, but is relating what happened over again in Peræa, just as it had occurred before in Galilee, is evident from this, that he himself, in his fifth chapter, records the previous Galilean incident. In answer to the first murmurings that broke out

against him for companying with publicans and sinners, Jesus had contented himself with saying, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they which are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Now, however, he makes a longer apology and defence. He will let these murmurers know what it is in the condition of these publicans and sinners which has drawn him to them and fixed on them his regard—why and for what it is that he has attached himself so closely to them,—even to bring them to repentance, win them back to God. He will draw aside for a moment the veil that hides the invisible world, and let it be seen what is thought elsewhere, among the angels of God, of that ready reception of sinners on his part which has evoked such aversion. Christ does this in three parables—that of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Lost Son. Taken together, these three parables compose our Lord's reply to the censure passed upon his conduct by the Pharisees, and they do so by presenting at once the whole history of that recovery from their lost condition, which it was Christ's great object to

see realized in those with whom he associated, and the effect of such recovery as contemplated by those who, not themselves feeling their need of it, looked askance upon the whole procedure by which it was realized; for just as clearly as the history of the loss and the recovery of the one sheep, and the one piece of money, and the one son, were intended to represent that conversion to God which it was the main aim of Christ's converse with the publicans and sinners to effect, just as clearly do the ninety-nine sheep, and the nine pieces of money, and the elder brother, stand as representatives of these murmuring Scribes and Pharisees—those just persons, just in their own eyes, who needed no repentance—thought they did not need it, and who, not understanding the nature or the necessity of the work of conversion in others, condemned the Saviour when engaged in this work. There is a difference, indeed, in the three parables, so far as they bear upon their character and conduct. The ninety and nine sheep and the nine pieces of money, being either inanimate or unintelligent, afforded no fit opportunity of a symbolic exhibition of the

temper and disposition of the Pharisees. This opportunity was afforded in the third parable, and is there largely taken advantage of. The elder brother—the type or emblem of those against whom Jesus is defending himself—is there brought prominently out upon the stage: a full revelation of his distrustful, spiteful, envious spirit is made. If thirteen verses are given to the story of the younger brother, the prodigal son, no fewer than eight are given to that of the elder brother. The thirteen verses too, it is to be remembered, cover the incidents of years; the eight, those of a single evening. Naturally and properly, the deeper, livelier, more universal interest that attaches to the story of the younger overshadows that of the elder brother—so deeply, indeed, that we think and speak of the parable as that of the Prodigal Son; but as originally spoken, and for the purposes originally contemplated, the part played by the elder brother had much more importance assigned to it than we now are disposed to give it. He is out in the field when his younger brother is so gladly welcomed and has the fatted calf killed to celebrate

his recovery. Returning in the evening, he hears the sounds of the music and the dancing within the happy dwelling. He calls one of the servants, and hears from him what has happened. And now all the fountains of selfishness and pride, and envy and malignity, pour out their bitter waters. He sulkily refuses to go in. His father comes out and remonstrates with him. But he will listen to no entreaty. He forgets for the moment all his family relationships. He will not call his parent father; he will not speak to him as to one to whom he had been indebted—rather he will charge him with injustice and unkindness; he will not call the once lost, but now found one his brother—"this thy son" is the way that he speaks of him. Notwithstanding all his unfilial, unbrotherly, contemptuous arrogance, how kindly, how patiently is he dealt with; how mildly is the father's vindication made; how gently is the rebuke administered! Did it soften him, subdue him? did he, too, come to see how unworthy he was to be the son of such a father? melted into penitence, did he, too, at last throw himself into his father's arms, and in him was

another lost one found? Just as in the parable of the Barren Fig-tree and the Great Supper, the curtain drops as the scene should come upon the stage in which the final fortunes of those of whom we take this elder brother as the type should have been disclosed. And in so closing, this parable goes far to proclaim its birth-time as belonging to the period when Jesus was just beginning to lift the veil which hung over the shrouded future of impenitent and unbelieving Israel.

The next parable, that of the Unjust Steward, was addressed particularly, and we may say exclusively, to the disciples. It contains no note of time by which the date of its delivery might be determined. We are struck, however, with finding that throughout the period now before us, it was as servants waiting and watching for the return of their master, as stewards to whom their absent lord has committed the care of his household during a temporary departure, that the apostles and disciples were generally addressed. And even as the woes impending over doomed Israel were now filling the Saviour's eye, the first pre-inti-

mation of them breaking forth from his lips, even so does the condition of the mother church at Jerusalem, in the dreary years of persecution that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, seem to have lain at this time heavy upon his heart. It was with reference to the sorrows and trials that his servants should in that interval endure, and to the wrongs inflicted on them, that the parable of the Unjust Judge was spoken. Its capital lesson was importunity in prayer, but the prayer that was to go up so often, and was at last to be heard, was prayer from the persecuted whilst suffering beneath the lash. This parable, therefore, like so many of its immediate predecessors, exactly fits the season at which St. Luke reports it as having been spoken.

Were it not for the interest which attaches to the question whether or not the chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, from the 9th to the 18th, present us with a true, and faithful, and orderly narrative of a period in our Lord's life of which no other of the Evangelists tell us anything, I should not have dwelt so long upon this topic. I shall have gained the end I had in view, however, if I have

brought distinctly out to view the five months that elapsed after Christ's farewell to Galilee, as spent, for the most part, in the regions beyond the Jordan, as occupied with a ministry bearing evident tokens of a transition period, in which, with his face set steadfastly towards the great decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, our Lord's thoughts were much occupied with the future—the future which concerned himself, his followers, the nation. The events, the miracles, the parables of the period, are all in harmony; and as a whole we may safely say, that they carry in their bosom internal evidence of their having been rightly located by St. Luke, unsuitable as they would have been either for any preceding or any posterior section of our Lord's life. It is but attributing to Christ our humanity in true and perfect form to imagine that the ending of his labours in Galilee and Judea, and the near prospect of his death, threw him into an attitude of thought and feeling congenial to the circumstances in which he was placed. It was natural that the unseen and the future should at this time absorb the seen and the present. It may be

a fancy, but I have thought, while reading again and again the ten parables which belong to this period, that far more frequently and more vividly than ever before in his ministry is the invisible world laid bare. The spirit summoned that night into the immediate presence of its Judge—the angels rejoicing over each repentant returning sinner—the bosom of Abraham upon which Lazarus is represented as reposing—the hell into which the soul of the rich man in dying sinks—where in any of the preceding addresses or parables of our Lord have we the same unfolding of the world that lies beyond the grave? Is it not as one who is himself holding closer fellowship with that world into which he is so soon himself to enter that Jesus speaks? One thing is not a fancy, that more frequently and more urgently than ever before does Jesus press upon his disciples the duty of holding such fellowship. By the story of the friend at midnight awakened by the continued and repeated solicitations of his neighbour, by that of the unjust judge moved to redress her wrongs by the simple importunity of the widow, by that of the prayer of the poor

publican heard at once and answered, by the appeal to their own generosity as fathers in the treatment of their children, did Jesus at this time seek to draw his disciples to the throne of grace, and keep them there, praying on in the assurance that earnest, renewed, repeated petitions offered in sincerity and faith shall never go up to God in vain. And who is he that encourages us thus to pray—that gives us the assurance that our prayers will be answered? Is he not our own great and gracious Advocate, who takes our imperfect petitions as they spring from our defiled lips, our divided and sinful hearts, and turns them into his own all-powerful, all-prevailing pleadings as he presents them to the Father?

XI.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.[1]

"BEHOLD, a certain lawyer stood up"—in all likelihood within some synagogue upon a Sabbath day. In rising to put a question to Jesus, he was guilty of no impertinent intrusion. Jesus had assumed the office of a public teacher, and it was by questions put and answered that this office was ordinarily discharged. This lawyer "stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" His object might have been to perplex and entangle—to involve Christ in a difficulty from which he perceived or hoped that he would be unable to extricate himself. Questions of this kind were often put to Jesus, their very character and construction betraying their intent. But the question of the lawyer is not one of this nature. Something more

[1] Luke x. 25-29.

than a mere idle curiosity, or a desire to test the extent of Christ's capacity or knowledge, appears to have prompted it. It is not presented in the bare abstract form. It is not, "Master, what should be done that eternal life be inherited?" but, "Master, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" It looks as if it came from one feeling a true, deep, and personal interest in the inquiry.

The manner in which our Lord entertained it confirms this impression. Questions of many kinds from many quarters were addressed to Jesus. With one or two memorable exceptions, they were all answered, but in different ways; whenever any insidious and sinister purpose lay concealed beneath apparent homage, the answer was always such as to show that the latent guile lay open as day to his eye. But there is nothing of that description here. In the first instance, indeed, he will make the questioner go as far as he can in answering his own question. He will tempt—*i.e.*, try or prove him in turn. Knowing that he is a scribe well instructed in the law, he will throw him back upon his own knowledge. Before saying anything about eternal life, or the

manner of its inheritance, Jesus says, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" It is altogether remarkable that in answer to a question so very general as this—one which admitted of such various replies—this man should at once have laid his hand upon two texts, standing far apart from each other—the first occurring early in Deuteronomy, the second far on in Leviticus —texts having no connexion with each other in the outer form or letter of the law, to which no peculiar or pre-eminent position is there assigned, which are nowhere brought into juxtaposition, nor are quoted as if, when brought together, they formed a summary or compound of the whole; the two very texts, in fact, which, on an after occasion, in answer to another scribe, our Lord himself cited as the two upon which all the law and the prophets hung. The man who, overlooking the whole mass of ceremonial or ritualistic ordinances as being of altogether inferior consideration, not once to be taken into account when the question was one as to a man's inheriting eternal life, who so readily and so confidently selected these two commandments as containing the sum and sub-

stance of the whole, gave good proof how true his reading of the law was. "And Jesus said to him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." 'Take but thine own right reading of the law, fulfil aright those two great precepts, Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, Love thy neighbour as thyself, and thou shalt live; live in loving and in serving, or if thou reachest not in this way the life thou aimest at, thou wilt at least, by the very failure, be taught to look away from the precepts to the promises, and so be led to the true source and fountain of eternal life in the free grace of the Father through me the Son.'

Trying to escape from the awkward position of one out of whose own lips so simple and satisfactory a reply to his own question had been extracted—desiring to justify himself for still appearing as a questioner, by showing that there was yet something about which there remained a doubt—he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" We may fairly assume that one so well read as this man was as to the true meaning of the law, was equally well read as to the popular

belief and practice regarding it. He knew what interpretation was popularly put on the expression, "thy neighbour," which stood embodied in the practice of his countrymen. He knew with what supercilious contempt they looked down upon the whole Gentile world around them—calling them the "uncircumcised," the "dogs," the "polluted," the "unclean,"—with what a double contempt they regarded the Samaritans living by their side. He knew that it was no part of the popular belief to regard a Samaritan as a neighbour. So far from this, the Jew would have no dealings with him, cursed him publicly in his synagogue, would not receive his testimony in a court of justice, prayed that he might have no portion in the resurrection. He knew all this—had himself been brought up to the belief and practice. But he was not satisfied with it. Along with that fine instinct of the understanding which had enabled him to extract the pure and simple essence out of the great body of the Jewish code, there was that finer instinct of the heart which taught him that it was within too narrow bounds that the love to our neighbour had been limited. He saw and

felt that these bounds should be widened; but how far?—upon what principle, and to what extent? Anxious to know this, he says, "And who is my neighbour?"

Christ answers by what we take to be the recital of an incident that had actually occurred. A fictitious story—a parable invented for the occasion—would not so fully have answered the purpose he had in view. A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. We are not told who or what he was: but the conditions and object of the narrative require that he was a Jew. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho—though short, and at certain seasons of the year much frequented—was yet lonely and perilous to the last degree, especially to a single and undefended traveller. It passes through the heart of the eastern division of the wilderness of Judea, and runs for a considerable space along the abrupt and winding sides of a deep and rocky ravine, offering the greatest facilities for concealment and attack. From the number of robberies and murders committed in it, Jews of old called it "the Bloody Road," and it retains its character still. We travelled it,

guarded by a dozen Arabs, who told, by the way, of an English party that the year before had been attacked and plundered and stripped, and we were kept in constant alarm by the scouts sent out beforehand announcing the distant sight of dangerous-looking Bedouin. All the way from Bethany to the plain of the Jordan is utter solitude,—one single ruin, perhaps that of the very inn to which the wounded Jew was carried, being the only sign of human habitation that meets the eye. Somewhere along this road, the solitary traveller of whom Jesus speaks is attacked. Perhaps he carries his all along with him, and, unwilling to part with it, stands upon his defence, wishing to sell life and property as dearly as he can. Perhaps he carries but little—nothing that the thievish band into whose hands he falls much value. Whether it is that a struggle has taken place, or that exasperation at disappointment whets their wrath, the robbers of the wilderness strip their victim of his raiment, wound him, and leave him there half dead. As he lies in that condition on the roadside, first a priest, and then a Levite approaches. A single

glance is sufficient for the priest; the Levite stops, and takes a longer, steadier look. The effect in either case is the same—abhorrence and aversion. As men actuated by some other sentiment beyond that of mere insensibility, they shrink back, putting as great a distance as they can between them and the poor naked wounded man; as if there were pollution in proximity—as if the very air around the man were infected—as if to go near him, much more to touch, to lift, to handle him, were to be defiled. To what are we to attribute this? To sheer indifference—to stony-hearted inhumanity? That might explain their passing without a feeling of sympathy excited or a hand of help held out, but it will not explain the quick and sensitive recoil—the passing by on the other side. Is it, then, the bare horror of the sight that drives them back? If there be something to excite horror, surely there is more to move pity. That naked, quivering body, those gaping, bleeding wounds, the pale and speechless lips, the eyes so dull and heavy with pain, yet sending out such imploring looks—where is the human heart, left free to its own spontaneous actings, they could

fail to touch? But these men's hearts—the hearts of the priest and Levite—are not left thus free: not that their hearts are destitute of the common sympathies of our nature—not that their breasts are steeled against every form and kind of human woe—not that, in other circumstances, they would see a wounded, half-dead neighbour lying, and leave him unpitied and unhelped. No! but because their hearts—as tender, it may have been, by nature as those of others—have been trained in the school of national and religious bigotry, and have been taught there, not the lesson of sheer and downright inhumanity, but of that narrow exclusiveness which would limit all their sympathies and all their aid to those of their own country and their own faith. The priest and the Levite have been up at Jerusalem, discharging, in their turn, their offices in the Temple. They have got quickened afresh there all the prejudices of their calling; they are returning to Jericho, with all their prejudices strong within their breasts; they see the sad sight by the way; they pause a moment to contemplate it. Had it been a brother priest, a brother Levite, a brother Jew

that lay in that piteous plight, none readier to help than they; but he is naked, there is nothing on him or about him to tell who or what he is—he is speechless, and can say nothing for himself. He may be a hated Edomite, he may be a vile Samaritan, for aught that they can tell. The possibility of this is enough. Touch, handle, help such a man! they might be doing thereby a far greater outrage to their Jewish prejudices than they did to the mere sentiment of indiscriminate pity by passing him by, and so they leave him as they find him, in haste to get past the dangerous neighbourhood, to congratulate themselves on the wonderful escape they had made—for the wounds of the poor wretch were fresh, and bleeding freely—it could have been but shortly before they came up that the catastrophe had occurred; had they started but an hour or two earlier from Jerusalem his fate might have been theirs. Glad at their own good fortune, they hurry on, finding many an excuse beside the real one for their neglect.

How then are we exactly to characterize their conduct? It was a triumph of prejudice over humanity—the very kind of error and of crime

against which Jesus wished to guard the inquiring lawyer. And it was at once with singular fidelity to nature, and the strictest pertinence to the question with which he was dealing, and to the occasion that called it forth, that it was in the conduct of a priest and of a Levite that this triumph stood displayed—for were they not the fittest types and representatives of that malign and sinister influence which their religion,—misunderstood and misapplied,—had exerted over the common sympathies of humanity? Had they read aright their own old Hebrew code, it would have taught them quite a different lesson. Its broad and genial humanity is one of the marked attributes by which, as compared with that of every other religion then existing, theirs was distinguished. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," was the motto which its great Author had inscribed upon its forehead. Its weightier matters were judgment and mercy, and faith and love. It had taken the stranger under its special and benignant protection. Twice over it had proclaimed, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or thy brother's ox fall down by the way and hide

thyself from them—thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." And was a man not much better than an ass or an ox? And should not this priest and Levite—had they read aright their own Jewish law—have lifted up again their prostrate bleeding brother? But they had misread that law. They had misconceived and perverted that segregation from all the other communities of the earth which it had taught the Jewish people to cultivate. Instead of seeing in this temporary isolation the means of distributing the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom wide over all the earth, they had regarded it as raising them to a position of proud superiority from which they might say to every other nation, "Stand back, for we are holier than you." And once perverted thus, the whole strength of their religious faith went to intensify the spirit of nationality, and inflame it into a passion, within whose close and sultry atmosphere the lights even of common human kindness were extinguished. It was in a priest and in a Levite that we should expect to see this spirit carried out to its extreme degree, as it has been always in the priestly caste

that the fanatical piety which has trampled under foot the kindliest sentiments of humanity has shown itself in its darkest and most repulsive form.

After the priest and Levite have gone by, a certain Samaritan approaches. He too is arrested. He too turns aside to look upon this pitiable spectacle. For aught that he can tell, this naked wounded man may be a Jew. There were many Jews and but few Samaritans travelling ordinarily by this road. The chances were a thousand to one that he was a Jew. And this Samaritan must have shared in the common feelings of his people towards the Jews—hatred repaying hatred. But he thinks not of distinction of race or faith. The sight before him of a human being—a brother man in the extremity of distress—swallows up all such thoughts. As soon as he sees him he has compassion on him. He alights—strips off a portion of his own raiment—brings out the oil and the wine that he had provided for his own comfort by the way—tenderly binds up the wounds—gently lifts the body up and places it on his own beast—moves

with such gentle pace away as shall least exasperate the recent wounds. Intent upon his task, he forgets his own affairs—forgets the danger of lingering so long in such a neighbourhood—is not satisfied till he reaches the inn by the roadside. Having done so much, may he not leave him now? No, he cannot part from him till he sees what a night's rest will do. The morning sees his rescued brother better. Now he may depart. Yes, but not till he has done all he can to secure that he be properly waited on till all danger is over. He may be a humane enough man, the keeper of this inn, but days will pass before the sufferer can safely travel, and it may not be safe or wise to count upon the continuance of his kindness. The Samaritan gives the innkeeper enough to keep his guest for six or seven days, and tells him that whatever he spends more will be repaid. Having thus done all that the most thoughtful kindness could suggest to promote and secure recovery, he goes to bid his rescued brother farewell. Perhaps the good Samaritan leaves him in utter ignorance of who or what he was. Perhaps those pale

and trembling lips are still unable to articulate his thanks—but that parting look in which a heart's whole swelling gratitude goes out—it goes with him and kindles a strange joy. He never saw the sun look half so bright—he never saw the plain of Jordan look half so fair—a happier man than he never trod the road to Jericho. True, he had lost a day, but he had saved a brother; and while many a time in after life the look of that stark and bleeding body as he first saw it lying on the roadside would come to haunt his fancy—ever behind it would there come that look of love and gratitude to chase the spectral form away, and fill his heart with light and joy.

Here too is a triumph, not one, however, of prejudice over humanity, but of humanity over prejudice. For it were idle to think that it was because of any superiority over the priest and the Levite in his abstract ideas of the sphere of neighbourhood, and of the claims involved in simple participation of humanity, that this Samaritan acted as he did. No, it was simply because he obeyed the impulses of a kind and

loving heart, and that these were strong enough to lift him above all those prejudices of tribe and caste and faith, to which he, equally with the Jew, was liable.

And was there not good reason for it, that in the records of our Christian faith, in the teachings of its Divine Author, one solemn warning of this kind should be lifted up—one illustrious example of this kind should be exhibited? Our Redeemer came to establish another and closer bond of brotherhood than the earth before had known, to knit all true believers in the pure and holy fellowship of a common faith, a common hope, a common heirship of eternal life through him. But he would have us from the beginning know that this bond, so new, so sacred, so divine, was never meant to thwart or violate that other broader universal tie that binds the whole family of our race together, that makes each man the neighbour of every other man that tenants this earthly globe. Christianity, like Judaism, has been perverted,—perverted so as seriously to interfere with, sometimes almost entirely to quench, the sentiment of an universal philan-

thropy; but it has been so only when its true genius and spirit have been misapprehended; for of all influences that have ever descended upon our earth, none has ever done so much to break down the walls of separation, that differences of country, language, race, religion, have raised between man and man, and to diffuse the spirit of that brotherly love which overleaps all these temporary and artificial fences and boundary lines—which, subject to no law of limits, is a law itself—which, like the air and light of heaven, diffuses itself everywhere around over the broad field of humanity—tempering all, uniting all, brightening all, smoothing asperities, harmonizing discords, pouring a healing balm into all the rankling sores of life.

"Which now of the three," said Jesus to the lawyer, "was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves?"

Ashamed to say plainly "The Samaritan," yet unwilling or unable to exhibit any hesitation in his reply, he said, "He that showed mercy on him." Then said Jesus unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise." It is not "Listen and applaud."

it is "Go and do." If there be anything above another that distinguishes the conduct of the good Samaritan, it is its thoroughly practical character. He wasted no needless sympathy, he shed no idle tears. There are wounds that may be dressed,—he puts forth his own hand immediately to the dressing of them. There is a life that may be saved,—he sets himself to use every method by which it may be saved. He gives more than time, more than money: he gives personal service. And that is the true human charity that shows itself in prompt, efficient, self-forgetful, self-sacrificing help. You can get many soft, susceptible, sentimental spirits to weep over any scene or tale of woe. But it is not those who will weep the readiest over the sorrow who will do the most to relieve it. Sympathy has its own selfishness; there is a luxury in the tears that it loves idly to indulge. Tears will fill the eye—should fill the eye—but the hand of active help will brush them away, that the eye may see more clearly what the hand has to do Millions have heard or read the tale of the Good Samaritan. Their eyes have glistened and their hearts

have been all aglow in approving, applauding sympathy; but of all these millions, how many are there who imitate the example given, who have given a day from their business to a suffering brother, who have waited by the sick, and with their own hand have ministered to his wants?

The beauty and force of that special lesson which the story of the Good Samaritan was intended to convey is mightily enhanced as we remember how recently our Lord himself had suffered from the intolerance of the Samaritans; only a few days before, we know not how few, having been refused entrance into one of their villages. He himself then gave an exhibition of the very virtue he designed to inculcate. But why speak of this as any single minor act of universal love to mankind on his part? Was not his life and death one continuous manifestation of that love? Yes, bright as that single act of the Good Samaritan shines in the annals of human kindness, all its brightness fades away in the full blaze of that love of Jesus, which saw not a single traveller, but our whole race, cast

forth naked, bleeding, dying, and gave not a day of his time, nor a portion of his raiment, but a whole lifetime of service and of suffering, that they might not perish, but have everlasting life.

XII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.[1]

At some time and in some place of which we must be content to remain ignorant, Jesus had gone apart from his disciples to pray. They had noticed his doing so frequently before; but there was a peculiarity in this case. He had either separated himself from them by so short a distance, or they had come upon him afterwards so silently and unobserved, that they stood and listened to him as he prayed. Perhaps they had never previously overheard our Lord when engaged in private devotion. The impression made on them was so deep, the prayer that they had been listening to was so unlike any that they themselves had ever offered—if that and that only be prayer, they feel they know so little how to do it—*that*, on the impulse of the moment, one of them, when Jesus had ceased, said to him,

[1] Luke xi. 1-13.

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." We do not stand in the same peculiar external circumstances with him who preferred this request, but the same need is ours. There is access still for us into the presence of our Redeemer, nor is there in coming to him one petition that should spring more quickly to our lips, one that can come from them more appropriately, than this—"Lord, teach us to pray." To pray is to realize the presence of the Supreme—to come into the closest possible connexion with the greatest of Beings. To pray is to lay our imperfect tribute of acknowledgment at his feet—to supplicate for that which we know that he only can bestow—to bring our sin to him, so that it may be forgiven—our wants to him, so that he may supply them as seems best in his sight. What is our warrant for making such approach? how may it best be made? what should we ask for? and how should we ask for it? None can answer these questions for us as Jesus could. How gladly, then, should we welcome, and how carefully should we study such answers as he has been pleased to give!

On bringing together all that Christ has declared in the way of precept, and illustrated in the way of example, I think it will appear that as there is no one duty of the religious life of such pre-eminent importance in its direct bearing on our spiritual estate, so there is no one about the manner of whose right discharge fuller instructions have been left by him. Thus, in the instance now before us, in answer to the request presented to him, he at once recited a prayer which stands as the pattern or model of all true prayer. Without entering into a minute examination of the separate clauses of this prayer, let me crave your attention to three of the features by which it is pre-eminently distinguished.

1. Its shortness and simplicity. It is very plain; not a part or petition of it which, as soon as it is capable of praying, a child cannot easily understand. It is very brief, occupying but a minute or two in the utterance; so that there is not a season or occasion for prayer in which it might not be employed. There is no ambiguity, no circumlocution, no expansion, no repetition here. It is throughout the direct expression of

desire; that desire in each case clothing itself in the simplest, compactest form of speech. In the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus first repeated this prayer, he offered it in contrast with the tedious amplifications and reiterations of which the Jewish and heathen prayers were then ordinarily composed. The Jews, as the heathen of old, as the Mussulmans still, had their set hours throughout the day for prayer; and so fond were they of exhibiting the punctuality and precision and devoutness with which the duty was discharged, that they often arranged it so that the set hour should find them in some public place. Such practice, as altogether contrary to the spirit and object of true devotion, as part of that mere dead formalism which it was the great object of his teaching to unmask, Jesus utterly condemned. "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They *have* their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in

secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner pray ye." It was as an antidote to the kind of prayers then generally employed, as well as a pattern specimen for after use within the Church, that Jesus then proceeded to repeat the prayer which has been called by his name. It was not to lie by or be deposited as a mere standard measure by which other prayers were to be tried. It was to be used —to be repeated. When, many months after its first recital, it was said to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," he was not satisfied with saying, "Pray generally in such a mode or style as this;" he prescribed the very words,—"When ye pray, *say*," and he repeated the very prayer that he formerly had spoken. Not that he put much or any importance upon the exact words to be employed. In three out of the six petitions of which the prayer

is made up, there are variations in the words, not enough to make the slightest difference in the meaning, but sufficient to show that it was not simply by a repetition of the words that the prayer was truly said. With rigorous exactness, this prayer might be said over and over again till it became a very vain repetition—all the vainer, perhaps, because of the very excellence of the form that was so abused. But over and over again—day by day—it might be repeated without any such abuse. All depends upon how you use it. Enter into its meaning—put your own soul and their own sense into the words—let it be the true and earnest desires of your heart that you thus breathe into the ear of the Eternal—and you need not fear how often you repeat it, or think that because you say the same words over again you sin. Our Lord himself, within the compass of an hour, repeated the same prayer thrice in the garden. Use it, however, as a mere form, with no other idea than that because it has been "authoritatively prescribed" it ought to be employed,—a single such use of it is sin.

2. The order and proportion of the petitions in

the Lord's prayer. It naturally divides itself into two equal parts; the one embracing the first three petitions, the other the three remaining ones—these parts palpably distinguished from each other by this, that in the former the petitions all have reference to God, in the latter to man. In the former the thoughts and desires of the petitioner are all engrossed with the name, the kingdom, the will of the great Being addressed; in the latter with his own wants, and sins, and trials. It would be carrying the idea of the Lord's prayer as a pattern, or model, to an illegitimate length, were we to say that because about one-half of the prayer is devoted to the first of these objects, and one half to the other, our prayers should be divided equally between them. Yet surely there is something to be learned from the precedence assigned here to the great things which concern the name, and kingdom, and will of our Heavenly Father, as well as from the space which these occupy in this prayer. You have but to reflect a moment on the structure and proportion of parts in any of our ordinary prayers, whether in private or in public, and especially on

the place and room given in them to petitions touching the coming of God's kingdom, and the doing of his will on earth as it is done in heaven, to be satisfied as to the contrast which in this respect they present to the model laid down by Christ himself. Our prayers, such as they are, with all their weaknesses and imperfections, will not, we are grateful to remember, be cast out because we yield to a strong natural bias, and press into the foreground, and keep prominent throughout, those personal necessities of our spiritual nature which primarily urge us to the throne of grace. Our Heavenly Father not only knoweth what things we need before we ask them, he knoweth also what the things are, the need of which presses first and heaviest upon our hearts. Nor will he close his ear to any returning, repentant, hungering, and thirsting spirit, simply because these are pressed first and most urgently upon his regard. Is it not well, nevertheless, that we should be reminded, as the prayer dictated by our Saviour so emphatically does, that selfishness may and does creep into our very prayers, and that the perfect form of all right approach, all right address, to the

Divinity, is that in which the place of supremacy which of right belongs to Him is duly and becomingly recognised. More especially should it be so in all prayers that go up from this sinful earth to those pure and holy heavens: for if it be true—as the whole body of the prayer prescribed by Jesus teaches us that it is—that we are living in a world where God's name is not hallowed as it ought to be, is often dishonoured and profaned—in a world where God's kingdom of justice and holiness and love is not universally established, where another and quite opposite kingdom contests with it the empire of human souls—in a world where other wills than that of God are busily at work, not always consenting to or working under his, but resisting and opposing it; —then surely if the name, the kingdom, the will of our Father which is in heaven were as dear to us as they ought to be, first and above all things beside, we should desire that his name should be hallowed, his kingdom should come, his will should be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Let us then as often as we use this prayer receive with meekness the rebuke it casts upon that tendency

and habit of our nature which leads us even in our prayers to put our own things before the things of our Heavenly Father; and let us urge our laggard spirits onward and upward from the sense and sight of our personal necessities, till, filled with adoration, and gratitude, and love, before we even make mention before him of a single individual want, we be ready with a true heart to say, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

And whilst receiving the lesson clearly to be gathered from the place and space occupied by the first three petitions of our Lord's prayer, let its fourth petition, in its sequence, and in its solitariness, and in its narrowness, proclaim to us the place even among our own things which earthly and bodily, as compared with spiritual provisions, possessions, enjoyments, ought to have. Is it without a meaning that we are taught to pray first, "Thy will be done," and then immediately thereafter, "Give us this day our daily bread"? The bread is to be asked that by it the life may be preserved, and the life is to be pre-

served that it may be consecrated to the doing of God's will. According to the tenor of the prayer and the connexion of these two petitions, we are not at liberty to ask for the daily bread irrespective of the object to which the life and strength which it prolongs and imparts are to be devoted. It were a vain and hollow thing in any of us to pray that God's will be done, as in heaven, so on earth, if we do not desire and strive that it should be done as by others so also by ourselves. And it is as those who do thus desire, and are thus striving, that we are alone at all likely to proceed to say, "Give us this day our daily bread." A natural and moderate request, we may be ready to think, which all men will at once be prepared to present to God. Yet not so easy to present in the spirit in which Jesus would have us to offer it. Not so easy to feel our continued and entire dependence on God for those very things that we are most tempted to think we have acquired by our own exertions, and secured to ourselves and our families by our own skill and prudence. Not so easy to pray for a competent portion of the things of this life, only that by the manner of our using

and enjoying them the will of our Heavenly Father, his own gracious purpose in placing us where we are placed, and in giving us all that we possess, may be carried out. Not so easy to limit thus our desires and efforts in this direction, and to be satisfied with whatever the portion be that God pleases to bestow. Not so easy to renew this petition, day by day, as conscious that all which comes each day comes direct from the hand of God—comes to those who have no right or title to claim it as their own—who should ask and receive it continually as a gift. Not so easy to narrow the petition to the day, leaving to-morrow in God's hands. The simplest and easiest, though it seems at first, of all the six petitions, perhaps this one about our daily bread is one that we less frequently than any other present in the true spirit. It stands there in the very centre of the prayer—the only one bearing upon our earthly condition—preceded and followed by others, with whose spirit it must or ought to be impregnated—from which it cannot be detached. Secular in its first aspect, in this connexion how spiritual does it appear!

3. The fulness, condensedness, comprehensiveness, universality of the prayer. Of course it never was intended to confine within the limits of its few sentences the free spirit of prayer. The example of our Lord himself, of the apostles of the Church in all ages, has taught us how full and varied are the utterances of the human heart, when it breathes itself out unrestrainedly unto God in prayer. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—ample the freedom and wide the range that the Holy Spirit takes when he throws the human spirit into the attitude, and sustains it in the exercise of prayer—prompting those yearnings which cannot be uttered, those desires and affections which words multiplied to the uttermost fail adequately to express. In the past history, in the existing condition of every human soul, there is an infinitude of individual peculiarities. To forbid all references to these, all manifestations of these in prayer—to tie every one down at every season to pray as every one else—to allow no minute confession of particular transgressions, no recital of the circumstances in which they were committed, aggravations by which they

were accompanied, no acknowledgment of special mercies, nor glad and grateful recounting how singularly appropriate and satisfying they had been—to cramp down within one dry and narrow mould all the plaints of sorrow, the moanings of penitence, the aspirations of desire, the beatings of gratitude, the breathings of love, the exultations of joy and hope, which fill the human heart, and which, in moments of filial trust, it would pour out into the ear of the Eternal—this were indeed to lay the axe at the root of all devotion. But while pleading for the very fullest liberty of prayer, let us not be insensible of the great benefit there is in ever and anon stepping out of that circle in which our own personal and particular sorrows and sins shape and intensify our prayers, into that upper and wider region in which, laying all those specialities for the time aside, we join the great company of the prayerful in all ages, in those few and simple, yet all-embracing petitions which they and we, and all that have gone before, and all that shall come after, unite in presenting to the Hearer and Answerer of prayer. And this is what we do in repeating

the Lord's prayer. In it we have,—stripped of all secondary or adventitious elements, the concentrated spirit and essence of prayer, a brief epitome of all the topics that prayer should embrace, a condensed expression of all those desires of the heart that should go up to God in prayer. It is not a prayer this for any one period of life —for any one kind of character—for any one outward or inward condition of things—for any one country—for any one age. The child may lisp its simple sentences as soon as it knows how to pray; it comes with no less fitness from the wrinkled lips of age. The penitent in the first hour of his return to God, the struggler in the thick of the spiritual conflict, the believer in the highest soarings of his faith and love, may take up and use alike this prayer. The youngest, the oldest, the simplest, the wisest, the most sin-stained, the most saintly, can find nothing here unsuitable, unseasonable. It gathers up into one what they all can and should unite in saying as they bend in supplication before God. And from the day when first it was published on the mount, as our Lord's own directory for prayer, down

through all these eighteen centuries, it has been the single golden link running through the ages that has bound together in one the whole vast company of the prayerful. Is there a single Christian now living upon earth—is there one among the multitude of the redeemed now praising God in heaven, who never prayed this prayer? I believe not one. It is not then, as isolated spirits, alone in our communion with God, it is as units in that unnumbered congregation of those who have bent, are bending, will bend, before the Throne, that we are to take up and to use this prayer. Not "my Father," but "our Father," is its key-note. Let it calm, and soothe, and elevate our spirits, as, leaving all that belongs to our own little separate circle of thoughts, and doubts, and fears, and hopes, and joys, behind, we rise to take our place in this vast company, and to mingle our prayers with theirs.

And to what is it that the Lord's prayer owes especially the universality of its embrace—the omnipotence of its power? To the special character in which it presents God to all—the peculiar standing before him into which it invites all

to enter. It is not to him as the great I AM, the Omnipotent, the Omnipresent Creator, and Lord of All; it is not to him as dwelling in the light that no man can approach to—as clothed with all the attributes of majesty and power, and justice and truth and holiness, the Moral Governor of the Universe—that it invites us to come. No, but to him as our Father in heaven—a Father regarding us with infinite pity, loving us with an everlasting love, willing and waiting to bestow, able and ready to help us. It is to him who taught us this prayer that we owe the revelation of God to us as such a Father. More than that, it is to Christ we owe the establishment of that close and endearing connexion of sonship to the Father—a connexion which it only remains for us to recognise, in order to enter into possession of all its privileges and joys. He who taught this prayer to his disciples, taught them, too, that no man can come unto the Father but through him. It were a great injustice unto him, if, because he has not named his own name in this prayer, we should forget that it is he who, by his Incarnation and Atonement, has so linked God and man,

earth and heaven, together, that all those sentiments of filial trust and confidence which this prayer expresses, may and should be cherished by every individual member of our race. There is not a living man who may not use this prayer, for while it is true that no man cometh to the Father but through Christ, it is equally true—indeed the one truth is involved in the other—that all men, every man, may now so come; not waiting till he is sure that he is a child of God, has such faith in God, or gratitude to God, or willingness to serve God as he knows a child should cherish; not grounding his assurance of God's Fatherhood to him on his sonship to God—no, but welcoming the assurance given to him in and by Jesus Christ, that God is his Father, and using that very Fatherhood as his plea in his first and last, his every approach to him. To each and every one of the multitude upon the mountain-side of Galilee—to them just as they were—to them simply as sons of men, partakers of that humanity which he also shared, Jesus said, "God is your Father, treat him as your Father, commend your future to him, cast all your care upon

him as such." "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Pray to him as such, then. "When thou prayest, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret." After this manner pray ye—"Our Father which art in heaven." And what Jesus said to the multitude on the mountain-side, he says to every child of Adam. Was it not, indeed, upon the existence and character of that very relationship of God to us and to all men that Jesus grounded the assurance he would have us cherish that our prayers shall not, cannot, go up in vain to heaven? For it is worthy of remark that on both occasions when this prayer was recited within the compass of the same discourse, shortly after he had repeated it—as if his thoughts were returning to the subject, and he wished to fix firm in the hearts of his disciples a faith in the efficacy of such prayer—he added, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh"—asks as I have

told you he should, or for what I have told you he should—"every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask for a fish, will he give him a serpent? . . . . If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

XIII.

JESUS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.[1]

CHRIST'S first visit to Perœa, on his way up to the Feast of Dedication, was one of much locomotion and manifold activities. His second was dedicated rather to seclusion and repose. He retired to one chosen and hallowed spot—the place where John at first baptized—where he himself had first entered on his public ministry. Many resorted to him there, and many believed on him, but he did not go about as he had done before. Living in quiet with his disciples, a message came to him from Bethany. Some sore malady had seized upon Lazarus. His sisters early think of that kind friend, who they knew had cured so many others, and who surely would not be unwilling to succour them in their distress, and heal their brother; but they knew

[1] John x. 39-42; xi. 1-27.

what had driven him lately from Jerusalem, and are unwilling to break in upon his retirement, or ask him to expose himself once more to the deadly hatred of his enemies. The disease runs on its course; Lazarus is on the very point of death. They can restrain no longer. They send off a messenger to Jesus. No urgent entreaty, however, is conveyed that he should hasten to their relief. No course is dictated. No desire even expressed. They think it is not needed. They remember all the kindnesses they had already experienced at his hands—how often he had made their house his home—what special marks of personal attachment and regard he had shown to themselves and to their brother. They deem it enough, therefore, to bid their messenger say, as soon as he met Jesus, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." Jesus hears the message, and, without giving any other indication of his purpose, simply says, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This is all the answer that he makes to a message so simply and delicately expressed; by that very simplicity and delicacy making all the stronger

appeal to his sympathy. Nothing more being said by Jesus, nor anything further apparently intended to be done, the messenger of the anxious sisters has to be satisfied with this. It seems to be so far satisfactory: "This sickness is not unto death." Jesus either knows that Lazarus is to recover, or he is to take some method of averting death—is to cure him; may have already done so by a word spoken—a volition formed at a distance. Treasuring up the sentence that he has heard uttered, and extracting from it such comfort as he can, the messenger returns to Bethany, and Jesus remains still two days in the place where he was. During these two days the incidents of the message and the answer fail not to be the subject of frequent converse among the disciples. They too might understand it to be the reason of their Master's saying and doing nothing further in the matter that he was aware that the death the sisters dreaded was not to happen; or they too might think that his great power had already been exerted on behalf of one whom they knew he loved so much. So might they interpret the saying, "This sickness is not

unto death;" but what can they make of those other words by which these had been followed up? How could it be said of this sickness of Lazarus, whether it left him naturally or was removed by a mysterious exercise of their Master's powers of healing, that it was to be "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby?" This was saying a great deal more of the illness, however cured, than, so far as they can see, could be truly and fitly said of it. No further explanation, however, is made by Jesus, and they must wait the issue.

Two days afterwards Jesus calmly and resolutely, but somewhat abruptly and unexpectedly, says to them, "Let us go into Judea again." Though nothing was said or hinted about the object of the proposed visit, it would be very natural that the disciples should connect it with the message that had come from Bethany. But if it was to cure Lazarus that Christ was going, why had he not gone sooner? If the sickness that had been reported to him was not unto death, why go at all?—why expose himself afresh to the malice of those who were evidently bent upon his

destruction? "Master," they say to him, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" a remonstrance dictated by a sincere and laudable solicitude for their Master's safety, yet not without ingredients of ignorance and mistrust. "Are there not," said Jesus in reply, "twelve hours in the day?" 'My time for working, for the doing the will of my Father which is in heaven, is it not a set time, its bounds as fixed as those of the natural day, having, like it, its twelve hours, that no man can take from, and no man can add to? The hours of this my allotted period for finishing my earthly work must run out their course; and while they are running, so long as I am upon the path marked out for me, walking by the light that comes from heaven, they cannot be shortened, go where I may; so long as I go under my Father's guidance, so long as I do what he desires, my life is safe. True, eleven hours of this my day may be already gone; I may have entered upon the last and twelfth, but till it end a shield of defence is round me that none can break through. Fear not for me, then; till that twelfth hour strike I am as safe

in Judea as here. And for your own comfort, know that what is true of me is true of every man who walks in God's own light—the light that the guiding Spirit gives to every man—kindled within his soul to direct him through all his earthly work. If any man walk in that light, he will not, cannot stumble, or fall, or perish; but if he walk in the night, go where he is not called, do what he is not bidden, then he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. He has turned the day into night, and the doom of the night-traveller hangs over him.'

He pauses to let these weighty truths sink deep into the disciples' hearts, then, turning to them, he says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." In their anxiety about their Master they had forgotten their absent friend whose love to Jesus had flowed over upon them, to whom they also were attached. How humanly, how tenderly does the phrase "our friend Lazarus" recall him to their thoughts! It would seem as if the ties that knit our Lord to the members of that family at Bethany had been formed for this as for other reasons,

to show how open the heart of Jesus was, not merely to a universal love to all mankind, but to the more peculiar and specific affections of friendship. Among the twelve there was the one whom he particularly loved; among the families he visited there was one to which he was particularly attached. Outside the circle of his immediate followers there was one whom he called his friend. Had he not already so distinctly said that his sickness was not unto death, the disciples, remembering that he had said of Jairus's daughter, "she is not dead, but sleepeth," might at first have caught the true meaning of their Master's words; but the idea of the death of Lazarus is so far from their thoughts, that they put the first interpretation on them that occurs, and without thinking on the worse than trifling end that they were thus attributing to Christ as the declared purpose of his proposed visit, they say, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Then said Jesus unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him." Glad that he was not there! Yes, for it spared

him the pain of looking at his friend in his agony, at his sisters in their grief. Glad; for had he been there, could he have resisted the appeal of such a deathbed over which such mourners were bending? Could he, though meaning afterwards to raise him from the dead, have stood by and see Lazarus depart? Glad that he was not there! Was he insensible, then, to all the pangs which that departure must have cost Martha and Mary? —this one among the rest, that he was not there, and had not come when sent for? Was he insensible to the four days' weeping for the dead that his absence had entailed? Glad that he was not there! Had the mourning sisters heard the words, they might have fancied that his affection for their family had suffered a sudden chill. But there was no lack of sensibility to their sufferings; his sympathies with them had suffered no reverse. It was not that he loved or pitied them the less. It was that his sympathies, instead of resting on the single household of Bethany, were taking in the wider circle of his discipleship, and through them, or along with them, the whole family of our sinful, suffering humanity. It was

with a calm, deliberate forethought that on hearing of the sickness, he allowed two days to pass without any movement made to Bethany. He knew when Lazarus died—knew that he had died two days before he told his disciples of it, for the death, followed by speedy burial, must have occurred soon after the messenger left Bethany, in all likelihood before he reached the place where Jesus was; for if a day's journey carried the messenger (as it might have done to Bethabara), and another such day of travel carried Jesus and his disciples back again to Bethany, as Lazarus was four days in the grave when Jesus reached the spot, his decease must have taken place within a very short time after the original despatch of the message. Knowing when it happened, Jesus did not desire to be present at it—deliberately arranged it so that it should not be till four days after the interment that he should appear in Bethany. He had already in remote Galilee raised two from the dead—one soon after death, the other before burial. But now, in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, in presence of a mixed company of friends and enemies, he

has resolved, in raising Lazarus, to perform the great closing, crowning miracle of his ministry; and he will do it so that not the most captious or the most incredulous can question the reality either of the death or of the resurrection. It was to be our Lord's last public appearance among the Jews previous to his crucifixion. It was to be the last public miracle he was to be permitted to work. From the day that this great deed was done was to date the formal resolution of the Sanhedrim to put him to death. This close connexion of the raising of Lazarus with his own decease was clearly before his eye. His sayings and doings at Bethabara show with what deep interest he himself looked forward to the issue. If we cannot with certainty say that no miracle he ever wrought occupied beforehand so much of our Saviour's thoughts, we can say that no other miracle was predicted and prepared for as this one was.

"Lazarus is dead . . . . nevertheless let us go unto him." Had the disciples but remembered their Master's first words, to which the key had now been put into their hands, they might at

once have gathered what the object of that journey was in which Jesus invited them to accompany him, and the thought of it might have banished other fancies and other fears. But slow to realize the glory of the coming and predicted miracle, or quick to connect it with the after-risk and danger, they hesitate. One there is among them as slow in faith as the slowest—fuller, perhaps, than any of them of mistrust—yet quick and fervid in his love, seeing nothing but death before Jesus if once he shows himself at Jerusalem—who says unto his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him:" the expression of a gloomy and somewhat obstinate despondency, sinking into despair, yet at the same time of heroic and chivalrous attachment. Jesus says nothing to the utterer of this speech. He waits for other and after occasions to take Thomas into his hands, and turn his incredulity into warm and living faith.

The group journeys on to Bethany, and at last comes near the village. Some one has witnessed its approach, and goes with the tidings to where the mourning sisters and those who have to com-

fort them are sitting. It may have been into Martha's ear that the tidings are first whispered —Mary beside her, too overwhelmed with grief to hear. As soon as she hears that Jesus is coming, Martha rises and goes out to meet him. Mary, whether she hears or not, sees her sister rise and go, yet stays still in the house—the two sisters, the one in her eager movement, the other in her quiet rest, here as elsewhere showing forth the difference of their characters. Martha is soon in the Saviour's presence. The sight of Jesus fills her heart with strange and conflicting emotions. In his kind look she reads the same affectionate regard he had ever shown. Yet had he not delayed coming to them in their hour of greatest need? She will not reproach, for her confidence is still unbroken. Yet she cannot help feeling what looked like forgetfulness or neglect. Above all such personal feelings the thought of her dead brother rises. She thinks of the strange words the messenger had reported. She knows not well what they could have meant, to what they could have pointed; but the hope still lingers in her heart, that now that he at last

is here, the love and power of Jesus may find some way of manifesting themselves—perhaps even in recalling Lazarus from the dead. And in the tumult of these mixed feelings—in the agitation of regret and confidence, and grief and hope—she breaks out in the simple but pathetic utterance, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"—'it is what Mary and I have been saying to ourselves and to one another, over and over again, ever since that sad and sorrowful hour. If only thou hadst been here! I do not blame you for not being here. I do not know what can have kept you from coming. I will not doubt or distrust your love—but if thou hadst been here my brother had not died—you could, you would have kept him from dying—you could, you would have raised him up, and given him back to us in health. Nay, "I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."'

The reply of Jesus seems almost to have been framed for the very purpose of checking the hope that was obviously rising in Martha's breast. 'Thy brother," he says, "shall rise again,"—words not indeed absolutely precluding the pos-

sibility of a present restoration of her brother to life, but naturally directing her thoughts away from such a restoration to the general resurrection of the dead. Such at least is their effect upon Martha, as is evident from her reply, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day"—a reply which, though it proved the firmness of her faith in the future and general resurrection of the dead, indicated something like disappointment at what Jesus had said. But our Lord's great object in entering into this conversation had now been gained. Instead of fostering the expectation of immediate relief, he had drawn Martha's thoughts off for a time from the present, and fixed them upon the distant future of the invisible and eternal world. Having created thus the fit opportunity—here on the eve of performing the greatest of his miracles —here in converse with one of sincere but imperfect faith, plunged in grief, and seeking only the recovery of a lost brother, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never

die"—as if he had said, 'Martha, Martha, thou wert troubled once when I was in your dwelling with the petty cares of your household, but now a heavier trouble has come upon your heart. You mourn a brother's death, but would that even now I could raise your thoughts above the consideration of the life, the death, the resurrection of the perishable body, to the infinitely more momentous one of the life and the death of the indwelling, the immortal soul! You are looking to me with a lingering hope that I might find some way to assuage your present grief by giving back to you the brother that lies buried. You believe so far in me as to have the confidence that whatever I asked of God, God would give it me. Would that I could get you and all to look to me in another and far higher character than the assuager of human sorrow, the bringer of a present relief; that I could fix your faith upon me as the Prince of life, the author, the bestower, the originator, the supporter, the maturer of that eternal life within the soul over which death hath so little dominion—that whosoever once hath this life begun, in dying still lives, and in living can

never die.' For let us notice, as helping us to a true comprehension of these wonderful words of our Redeemer, that immediately after their utterance, he addressed to Martha the pointed question, "Believest thou this?" It was not unusual for our Lord to ask some profession of faith in his power to help from those on whom or for whom that power was about to be exerted. He did not need to ask any such profession from Martha. She had already declared her full assurance that he had the power of Deity at command. The very manner in which the question was put to Martha, "Believest thou this?" plainly intimates that some weighty truth lay wrapped up in the words just uttered beyond any to which she had already assented. Had there been nothing in what Christ now said beyond what Martha had previously believed—to which he had already testified—such an interrogation would have been without a meaning. It cannot be a mere proclamation of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, and of Christ's connexion with them, either as their human announcer or their Divine author, that is here made.

No such interpretation would explain or justify the language here employed. The primary and general assertion, "I am the resurrection and the life," gets its only true significance assigned to it by the two explanatory statements with which it was followed up. "I am the life," said Jesus, not in any general sense as being the great originator and sustainer of the soul's existence, but in this peculiar and specific sense, that "whosoever liveth and believeth on me"—or rather, liveth by believing on me—"shall never die." And "I am the resurrection" in this sense, that "whosoever believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Such language connects, in some peculiar way, the life and resurrection that Jesus is now speaking of with believing on him; it at least implies that he has some other and closer connexion with the life and the resurrection of those who believe than he has with that of those who believe not. Jesus, in fact, is here, in these memorable words, only proclaiming to Martha, and through her to the world of sinners he came to save, what the great end of his mission is, and how it is that

that end is accomplished. Sin entered into this world, and death—not the dissolution of the body, but spiritual death—this death by sin. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die." And the death came with the first transgression. The pulse of the true spiritual life, of life in God and to God, ceased its beatings. Death reigned in all its coldness; the warmth of a pervading love to God had gone, and the chill of a pervading fear seized upon the soul. Death reigned in all its silence, for the voice of ceaseless prayer and praise was hushed. It reigned in all its torpid inactivity, for no longer was there a continued putting forth of the entire energies of the spirit in the service of its Maker. And the same death that came upon the first transgressor has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. And if to be under condemnation be death, if to be carnally-minded be death; if, amid all the variety of motives by which we naturally are influenced, there be, but at lengthened intervals, a weak and partial regard to that Great Being whom no creature can altogether banish from its thoughts, then surely the Scriptures err not in the repre-

sentation that it was into a world of the dead that Jesus came. He came to be the quickener of the dead; having life in himself, to give of this life to all who came to him for it. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." "And we know that the Son of God is come. This is the true God and eternal life." "And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

Such are the testimonies borne by a single apostle in one short epistle (1st Epistle of John). More striking than any other words upon this subject are those of our Lord himself. Take

up the Gospel of St. John, the special record of those discourses of our Lord in which he most fully unfolded himself, telling who he was, and what he came to this earth to do, and you will not find one of them in which the central idea of life coming to the dead through him is not presented. Thus, in his conversation with Nicodemus on the occasion of his first Passover, you hear him say: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."[1] Thus, also, in his conversation with the woman of Samaria: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living" (life-giving) "water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall

[1] John iii. 14-16.

give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."[1] Thus, also, in his next discourse at Jerusalem, on the occasion of his second Passover: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."[2] Thus, also, in the great discourse delivered after the feeding of the five thousand: "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. I am that bread of life. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of

[1] John iv. 10-14. [2] John v. 21, 24, 40.

man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."[1] Thus, also, at the Feast of Tabernacles: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."[2] Thus, also, at the Feast of Dedication: "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."[3] And so also on the eve of his last and greatest miracle: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Is there nothing striking in it that, from first to last, running through all these discourses of our Saviour—to be found in every one of them, without a single exception—this should be held out to us by our Lord himself as the great end and object of his life and death,—

[1] John vi. 39, 40, 48, 50, 51, 53, 56.
[2] John viii. 12, 51. [3] John x. 27, 28.

that we, who were all dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God, should find for these dead souls of ours a higher and everlasting life in him?

The life of the soul lies, first, in the enjoyment of God's favour—in the light of his reconciled countenance shining upon it, in the everlasting arms of his love and power embracing it. The great obstacle to our entrance upon this life is conscious guilt—the sense of having forfeited the favour—incurred the wrath of God. This obstacle Christ has taken out of the way by dying for us, by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. There is redemption for us through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. Not that the Cross is a talisman which works with a hidden, mystic, unknown, unfelt power—not that the blood of the great sacrifice is one that cleanseth past guilt away, leaving the old corruption untouched and unsubdued. Jesus is the life in a further and far higher sense than the opener of a free way of access to God through the rent veil of his flesh. He is the perennial source of that new life within, which consists in communion

with God—likeness to God—in gratitude, in love, in peace, and joy, and hope—in trusting, serving, submitting, enduring. This life hangs ever and wholly upon him; all good and gracious affections, every pure and holy impulse, the desire and the ability to be, to do, to suffer—coming to us from him to whose light we bring our darkness, to whose strength we bring our weakness, to whose sympathy our sorrow, to whose fulness our emptiness. Our natural life, derived originally from another, is for a season dependent on its source, but that dependence weakens and at last expires. The infant hangs helplessly upon its mother at the first. But the infant grows into the child, the child into the man—the two lives separate. Not such our spiritual life. Coming to us at first from Christ, it comes equally and entirely from him ever afterwards. It grows, but never away from him. It gets firmer, more matured; but its greater firmness and maturity it owes to closer contact with him—simpler and more entire dependence on him, deeper and holier love to him. It is as the branch is in the vine, having no life when

parted from it; not as a child is in its parent, that believers are in Christ. There is but one relationship, of Son to Father—one wholly unique, —which fitly represents this union, which was employed by Christ himself to do so. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." It is indeed but the infancy of that life which lies in such oneness with the Son and the Father that is to be witnessed here on earth. Yet within that feeble infancy are the germinating seeds of an endless, an ever-progressive, an indestructible existence, raised by its very nature above the dominion of death; bound by ties indissoluble to him who was dead and is alive again, and liveth for evermore; an existence destined to run on its everlasting course, getting ever nearer and nearer, growing ever liker and liker to him from whom it flows.

Amid the death-like torpor which hath fallen upon us, stripping us of the desire and power to live wholly in God and wholly for God, who would not wish to feel the quickening touch of

the great Life-Giver, Jesus Christ—to be raised to newness of life in him—to have our life bound up with his for ever—hid with him in God? This—nothing less than this, nothing lower than this—is set before us. Who would not wish to see and feel it realized in his present, his future, his eternal existence? Then, let us cleave to Christ, resolved in him to live, desiring in him to die, that with him we may be raised at last, at the resurrection, on the great day, to those heavenly places where, free from all weakness, vicissitude, corruption, and decay, this life shall be expanded and matured throughout the bright ages of an unshadowed eternity.

XIV.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.[1]

It is not likely that Martha understood in its full meaning what Christ had said about his being the Resurrection and the Life. So far, however, as she did comprehend, she believed; and so when Jesus said to her, "Believest thou this?"—understanding that he had spoken about himself, and wished from her some expression of her faith—she said to him, "Yea, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." With crude ideas of the character and offices they attributed to him, many were ready to call Jesus the Christ, to believe that he was the Messias spoken of by the prophets. Martha's confession went much further than this: she believed him to be also the Son of God, to be that for claiming to be which the Jews had been

[1] John xi. 27-54.

ready to stone him, as one making himself equal with God. It may have been, regarding him too much as a mere man having power with God, that she had previously said, "But I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee;" but now that her thoughts are concentrated upon it, she tells out all the faith that is in her, and in so doing ranks herself beside Peter and the very few who at that time could have joined in the confession, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Had Mary and Lazarus not been in his thoughts Jesus might have pronounced over Martha the same benediction that he did over Peter, and said to her, "Blessed art thou, Martha, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." As it is, he simply accepts the good confession, and bids Martha go and call her sister.

Mary had not heard at first of the Lord's coming, or, if she had, was too absorbed in her sorrow to heed it. But now when Martha whispers in her ear, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee,"

she rises and hastens out to where Jesus is outside the village. No one had followed Martha when she went out there. But there was such an unusual quickness, such a fresh and eager excitement in this movement of Mary, that those around her ran with her and followed, saying, "She goeth to the grave to weep there." Thus did she draw along with her the large company that was to witness the great miracle.

Once again in the Master's presence, Mary is overwhelmed with emotion. She falls weeping at his feet; has nothing to say as she looks up at him through her tears but what Martha had said before: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Her grief checks all further utterance. Nor has Jesus anything to say. Mary is weeping at his feet, Martha is weeping at his side, the Jews are weeping all around. This is what death hath done, desolating a once happy home, rending with such bitter grief the two sisters' hearts, melting into kindred sorrow the hearts of friends and neighbours. The calm that had its natural home in the breast of the Redeemer is broken up: he grieves in spirit and is

troubled. Too heavy in heart himself, too troubled in spirit, as he stands with hearts breaking and tears falling all around him, to have any words of counsel or comfort for Mary such as he addressed to Martha, he can only say, "Where have ye laid him? They say to him, Lord, come and see." He can restrain no longer. He bursts into tears.

What shall we think or say of these tears of Jesus? There were some among those who saw him shed them, who, looking at them in their first and simplest aspect—as tears shed over the grave of a departed friend—said one to another, "Behold how he loved him!" There were others not sharing so much in the sisters' grief, who were at leisure to say, "Could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind have caused that even this man should not have died?" 'If he could have saved him, why did he not do it? He may weep now himself: had it not been better that he had saved these two poor sisters from weeping?' We take our station beside these men. With the first we say, Behold how he pities! See in the tears he sheds what a singular sympathy

with human sorrow there is within his heart—a sympathy deeper and purer than we have ever elsewhere seen expressed. To weep with others or for others is no unusual thing, and carries with it no evidence of extraordinary tenderness of spirit. It is what at some time or other of their lives all men have done. But there is a peculiarity in the tears of Jesus that separates them from all others—that gives them a new meaning and a new power. For where is Jesus when he weeps? a few paces from the tomb of Lazarus; and what is he about immediately to do? to raise the dead man from the grave, and give him back to his sisters. Only imagine that, gifted with such a power, you had gone on such an errand, and stood on the very edge of its execution, would not your whole soul be occupied with the great thing you were about to do, the great joy you were about to cause? You might see the sisters of the dead one weeping, but, knowing how very soon you were about to turn their grief into gladness, the sight would only hasten you forward on your way. But though knowing what a perfect balm he was so soon to lay upon all the

sorrow, Jesus shows himself so sensitive to the simple touch of grief, that even in such peculiar circumstances he cannot see others weeping without weeping along with them. How exquisitely tender the sympathy manifested in the tears that in such peculiar circumstances were shed!

Again we take our station beside the onlookers, and to the second set of speakers we would say—he could have caused that this man had not died. But his are no false tears, though shed over a calamity he could have prevented. He allowed Lazarus to die, he allowed his sisters to suffer all this woe, not that he loved them less, but because he knew that for him, for them, for others, for us all, higher ends were in this way gained than could have been accomplished by his cutting the illness short, and going from Bethabara to cure. Little did the weeping sisters know what a place in the annals of redemption the death and resurrection of their brother was to occupy. How earnestly in the course of the illness did they pray for his recovery! How eagerly did they despatch their messenger to Jesus! A single beam of light fell

on the darkness when the messenger brought back as answer the words he had heard Jesus utter—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." What other meaning could they put upon the words, but that either their brother was to recover, or Jesus was to interfere and heal him? Their brother died, and all the more bitterly because of their disappointment did they bemoan his loss. But what thought they when they got him back again—what thought they when they heard of Christ's own death and resurrection—what thought they when they came to know, as they had never done before, that Jesus was indeed the abolisher of death, the bringer of life and immortality to light? Would they then have wished that their brother had not died—that they had been saved their tears, but lost the hallowed resurrection-birth of their brother to his Lord, lost to memory the chiefest treasure that time gave to carry with them into eternity?

Groaning again in spirit, Jesus came to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone covered the niche within which the body of the dead was

lying. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." The doing so would at once expose the dead, and let loose the foul effluvium of the advanced decomposition. The careful Martha, whose active spirit ever busied itself with the outward and tangible side of things, at once perceives this, and hastens to interpose a check. Gently, but chidingly, the Lord said unto her, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" 'Was it not told thee in the words brought back by thy messenger that this sickness was to be for the glory of God—a glory waiting yet to be revealed? Have I not been trying to awaken thy faith in myself, as the resurrection and the life? Why think, then, of the existing state of thy brother's body? Why not let faith anticipate the future, and put all such lower thoughts and cares away?' The rebuke was gently given; but given at such a time, and in such presence, it must have fallen heavily upon poor Martha's heart.

And now the order is obeyed. Taking a hasty glance within, the removers of the stone withdraw. Jesus stands before the open sepulchre. But all

is not ready yet. There is to be a slowness, a solemnity in every step that shall wind up every spirit to the topmost point of expectation. Jesus lifts his eyes to heaven and prays, not to ask God to work the miracle, or give him power to do so. So might Moses, or Elijah, or any other of the great miracle-workers of earlier times have done, proclaiming thereby in whose name it was and by whose power they wrought. Jesus never did so. He stands alone in this respect. All that he did was done indeed in conjunction with the Father. He was careful to declare that the Son did nothing of himself, nothing independently. It was in faith, with prayer, that all his mighty works were wrought; but the faith was as peculiar as the prayer—both such as he alone could cherish and present. Ordinarily the faith was hidden in his heart, the prayer was in secret, muttered and unheard. But now he would have it known how close was the union between him and the Father. He would turn the approaching miracle into an open and incontrovertible evidence that he was the sent of the Father, the Son of God. And so, in words of thanksgiving rather

than of petition, he says, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me"—the silent prayer had already been heard and answered—"And I know that thou hearest me always,"—that thy hearing is not peculiar to this case, for as I am always praying, so thou art always answering—"but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." In no more solemn manner could the fact of his mission from the Father, and of the full consent and continued co-operation of the Father with him in all he said and did, be suspended upon the issue of the words that next come from his lips: "And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." The hour has come for the dead to hear and live. At once, and at that summons, the body lives, starts into life again, not as it had died, the life injected into a worn and haggard frame. It gets back in a moment all its healthful vigour. At once, too, and at that summons, from a dreamless sleep that left it nothing to tell about the four days' interval, or from a region the secrets of which it was not permitted to disclose, the spirit returns to its

former habitation. Lazarus rises and stands erect. But he is bound hand and foot, a napkin is over his face and across his eyes. So bound, as good as blind, he could take but a few timid shuffling steps in advance. "Loose him," said Jesus, "and let him go." They do it. He can see now all around. He can go where he pleases. Shall we doubt that the first use he makes of sight and liberty is to go and cast himself at the Redeemer's feet?

"Take ye away the stone," "Loose him, and let him go." Christ could easily by the word of his great power have removed the stone, untied the bandages. But he does not do so. There is to be no idle expenditure of the Divine energy. What human hands are fit for, human hands must do. The earthly and the heavenly, as in all Christ's workings, blend harmoniously together. So is it still in that spiritual world in which he still is working the wonders of his grace, raising dead souls to life, and nourishing the life that is so begotten.

It is not for us to quicken the spiritually dead. No human voice has power to pierce the closed

ear, to reach the dull, cold heart. The voice of Jesus can alone do that. But there are stones of obstruction which keep that voice from being heard. These we can remove. The ignorant can be taught, the name of Jesus be made known, the glad tidings of salvation published abroad. And when at the divine call the new life has entered into the soul, by how many bonds and ligaments, prejudices of the understanding, old holds of the affections, old habits of the life, is it hampered and hindered! These, as cramping our own or others' higher life, we may help to untie and fling away.

But the crowning lesson of the great miracle is the mingled exhibition that it makes of the humanity and divinity of our Lord. Nowhere, at no time in all his life, did he appear more perfectly human, show himself more openly or fully to be one with us, our true and tender elder brother, than when he burst into tears before the grave of Lazarus. Nowhere, at no time, did he appear more divine than when with the loud voice he cried, "Lazarus, come forth," and at the voice the dead arose and came forth.

And it is just because there meet in him the richness and the tenderness of an altogether human pity and the fulness of a divine power, that he so exactly and so completely satisfies the deepest inward cravings of the human heart. In our sins, in our sorrows, in our weaknesses, in our doubts, in our fears, we need sympathy of others who have passed through the same experience. We crave it. When we get it, we bless the giver, for in truth it does more than all things else. But there are many barriers in the way of our obtaining it, and there are many limits which confine it when it is obtained. Many do not know us. They are so differently constituted, that what troubles us does not trouble them. They look upon all our inward struggles and vexations as needless and self-imposed, so that just in proportion to the speciality of our trial is the narrowness of the circle from which we can look for any true sympathy. But even were we to find the one in all the earth by nature most qualified to enter into our feelings, how many are the chances that we should find his sympathy preoccupied, to the full engaged, without time or without

patience to make himself so master of all the circumstances of our lot, and all the windings of our thoughts and our affections, as to enable him to feel with us and for us, as he even might have done! But that which we may search the world for without finding is ours in Jesus Christ. All impediments removed, all limitations lifted off—how true, how tender, how constant, how abiding is his brotherly sympathy,—the sympathy of one who knows our frame, who remembers we are dust, of one who knows all about, all within us, and who is touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, "having himself been tempted in all things like as we are." It is not simply the pity of God; with all its fulness and tenderness, that had not come so close to us, taken such a hold of us; it is the sympathy of a brother-man that Jesus extends to us, free from all the restrictions to which such sympathy is ordinarily subjected.

But we need more than that sympathy; we need succour. Besides the heart tender enough to pity, we need the hand strong enough to help, to save us. We not only want one to be with us and feel with us in our hours of simple sorrow, we

want one to be with us and aid us in our hours of temptation and conflict, weakness and defeat—one not only to be ever at our side at all times and seasons of this our earthly pilgrimage, but to be near us then, to uphold us then, when flesh and heart shall faint and fail, to be the strength of our hearts then, and afterwards our portion for ever. In all the universe there is but one such. Therefore to him, our own loving, compassionate, Almighty Saviour, let us cling, that softly in the bosom of his gentle pity we may repose, and safely, by his everlasting arms, may for ever be sustained.

Let us now resume the narrative. The raising of Lazarus was too conspicuous a miracle, it had been wrought too near the city, had been seen by too many witnesses, and had produced too palpable results, not to attract the immediate and fixed attention of the Jewish rulers. Within a few hours after its performance Jerusalem would be filled with the report of its performance. A meeting of the Sanhedrim was immediately summoned, and sat in council as to what should be done. No doubt was raised as to the reality of

this or any of the other miracles which Christ had wrought. They had been done too openly to admit of that. But now, when many even of the Jews of Jerusalem were believing in him, some stringent measures required to be taken to check this rising, swelling tide, or who could tell to what it may carry them? There were divisions, however, in the council. It was constituted of Pharisees and of Sadducees, who had been looking at Jesus all through with very different eyes. The Pharisees, from the first, had hated him. He had made so little of all their boasted righteousness, had exalted goodness and holiness of heart and life so far above all ritualistic regularity, had simplified religion so, and encouraged men, however sinful, to go directly to God as their merciful Father, setting aside the pretensions of the priesthood, and treating as things of little worth the laboured theology and learning of the schools,—he had been so unsparing besides in exposing the avarice, the ambition, the sensuality that cloaked themselves in the garb of a precise and exclusive and fastidious religionism, that they early felt that their quarrel with him

was not to be settled otherwise than by his death. Very early, on the occasion of his second visit to Jerusalem, they had sought to slay him, at first nominally as a Sabbath-breaker, then afterwards, and still more, as a blasphemer.[1] In Galilee—to which he had retired to put himself out of the reach of the Pharisees of the capital—their hostility pursued him, till we read of the Pharisees and the Herodians then taking counsel together "how they might destroy him."[2] Once and again, at the Feast of Tabernacles and at the Feast of the Dedication, stones had been taken up to stone him to death, officers had been sent to arrest him, and the resolution come to and announced, that if any man should confess that he was the Christ, he should be excommunicated. But as yet no formal determination of the Sanhedrim had been made that he should be put to death. The reason of this delay, for suffering Christ to go at large even for so long a time as he did, was in all likelihood the dominance in the Sanhedrim of the Sadducean element. The Sadducees had their own grounds for disliking the person, the

[1] John v. 16, 18. [2] Mark iii. 6.

character, the teaching, the pretensions of Jesus, but they were not so vehement or so virulent in their persecution of him. Caring less about religious dogmas and observances than the rival sect, they might have been readier to tolerate him as an excited enthusiast; but now they also got frightened, for they were the great supporters of the Roman power, and the great fearers of popular revolt. And so when this meeting of the Great Council was called in haste, Pharisees and Sadducees found common ground in saying to one another, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Neither party believed that there was any chance of Jesus making a successful revolt, and achieving by that success a liberation from the Roman yoke, as it then lay upon them. The Pharisees, the secret enemies of the foreigner, saw nothing in Jesus of such a warlike leader as the nation longed for and required. The Sadducees, dreading some outbreak, but utterly faithless as to any good issue coming out of it, saw nothing before

them as the result of such a movement but the loss of such power as they were still permitted to exercise. And so both combined against the Lord. But there was some loose talking, some doubts were expressed by men like Nicodemus, or some feebler measures spoken of, till the high priest himself arose,—Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, connected thus with that family in which the Jewish pontificate remained for fifty years —four of the sons, as well as the son-in-law of Annas, having, with some interruptions, enjoyed this dignity. All through this period, embracing the whole of Christ's life from early childhood, Annas, the head of this favoured family, even when himself out of office, retained much of its power, being consulted on all occasions of importance, and acting as the president of the Sanhedrim. Hence it is that in the closing scenes of our Lord's history Annas and Caiaphas appear as acting conjunctly, each spoken of as High Priest. Caiaphas, like the rest of his family, like all the aristocracy of the Temple, was a Sadducee; and the spirit both of the family and the sect was that of haughty pride and a bold and reckless

cruelty. Caiaphas cut the deliberations short by saying impetuously and authoritatively to his colleagues, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." One life, the life of this Galilean, what is it worth? What matters it whether he be innocent or guilty, according to this or that man's estimate of guilt or innocence; it stands in the way of the national welfare. Better one man perish than that a whole nation be involved in danger, it may be in ruin. The false, the hollow, the unjust plea, upon which the life of many a good and innocent man, guilty of nothing but speaking the plain and honest truth, has been sacrificed, had all the sound, as coming from the lips of the High Priest, of a wise policy, a consultation for the nation's good. Pleased with themselves as such good patriots, and covering with this disguise all the other grounds and reasons for the resolution, it was determined that Jesus should be put to death. It remained only to see how most speedily and most safely it could be accomplished.

Unwittingly, in what he said Caiaphas had uttered a prophecy, had announced a great and central truth of the Christian faith. He had given to the death determined on too limited a range, as if it had been for that nation of the Jews alone that Jesus was to die. But the Evangelist takes up, expounds, and expands his words as carrying with them the broad significance that not for that nation only was he to die, but that by his death he "should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Strange ordering of Providence, that here at the beginning and there at the close of our Lord's passion—here in the Sanhedrim, there upon the cross—here from the Jewish High Priest, there from the Roman governor—words should come by which the unconscious utterers conspired in proclaiming the priestly and the kingly authority and office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

XV.

THE LAST JOURNEY THROUGH PERÆA: THE TEN LEPERS—THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM—THE QUESTION OF DIVORCE—LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO HIM—THE YOUNG RULER.[1]

CHRIST'S stay at Bethany on the occasion of his raising Lazarus from the dead must have been a very short one. The impression and effect of the great miracle was so immediate and so great that no time was lost by the rulers in calling together the council and coming to their decision to put Jesus to death. Hearing of this, no time on his part would be lost in putting himself, now only for a short time, beyond their reach. He retired in the first instance to a part of the country near the northern extremity of the wilderness of Judea, into a city called Ephraim, identified by many with the modern town

[1] Luke xvii. 11-37, xviii. 15-27; Matt. xix. 1-26; Mark x. 1-27.

of Taiyibeh, which lies a few miles north-east of Bethel. After some days of rest in this secluded spot, spent we know not how, the Passover drew on, and Jesus arose to go up to it. He took a circuitous course, passing eastward along the border-line between Galilee and Samaria, which lay not more than half a day's journey from Ephraim, descending into the valley of the Jordan, crossing the river, entering once more into Peræa, travelling through it southwards to Jericho. It was during this, the last of all his earthly journeys, that as he entered into a certain village there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, as the law required; but not wishing to let him pass without a trial made of his grace and power, lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." "Go show yourselves unto the priests," was all that Jesus said. He gave this order, and passed on. The first thing that the leper who knew or believed that the leprosy had departed from him had to do, was to submit himself for inspection to the priesthood, that his cure might be authenticated, and he be formally relieved from the restraints

under which he had been laid. And this is what these ten men are bidden now to do, whilst as yet no sign of the removal of the disease appears. Whether they all had a firm faith from the first that they would be cured we may well doubt. Perhaps there was but one among them who had such faith. They all, however, obey the order that had been given; it was at least worth trying whether anything could come out of it, and as they went they were all cleansed. The moment that the cure was visible, one of them, who was a Samaritan, ere he went forward to the priest, went back to Jesus, glorifying God with a loud voice, and falling at Christ's feet to give him thanks. The other nine went on, had their healing in due course authenticated, returned to their families and friends, but inquired not for their deliverer, nor sought him out to thank him. The contrast was one that Christ himself thought fit to notice. "Were there not ten cleansed," he said, "but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." But now once

more the Pharisees betake themselves to their congenial work, asking him when the kingdom of God should come. He corrects their errors, gives them solemn warnings as to a coming of the Son of Man, in whose issues the men of that generation should be very disastrously involved, adding the two parables of the Unjust Judge and of the Pharisee and the Publican. Once more, however, these inveterate enemies return to the assault. At an earlier period they had sought in his own conduct, or in that of his disciples, to find ground of accusation. Baffled in this, they try now a more insidious method, to which we find them having frequent recourse towards the close of our Lord's ministry. They demand his opinion upon the vexed question of divorce. The two great schools of their Rabbis differed in their interpretation of the law of Moses upon this point. Which side would Jesus take? Decide as he may, it would embroil him in the quarrel. To their surprise he shifted the ground of the whole question from the only one upon which they rested it, the authority of Moses; told them in effect that they were wrong in thinking that

because Moses, or God through Moses, tolerated certain practices, that therefore these practices were absolutely right and universally and throughout all time to be observed—furnishing thereby a key to the Divine legislation for the Israelites, which we have been somewhat slow to use as widely as we should; told them that it was because of the hardness of their hearts, to prevent greater mischiefs that would have followed a purer and stricter enactment, that the Israelites had been permitted to put away their wives (divorce allowed thus, as polygamy had been), but that from the beginning it had not been so, nor should it be so under the new economy that he was ushering in, in which, save in a single case, the marriage tie was to be indissoluble.

In happy contrast with all such insidious attempts to entangle him in his talk was the next incident of the last journey through Peræa. They brought little children—infants—to him. It is not said precisely who brought them, but can we doubt that it was the mothers of the children? They brought their little ones to Jesus that he might touch them, put his hands upon them, pray

for and bless them. Some tinge of superstition there may have been in this, some idea of a mystic benefit to be conveyed even to infancy by the touch and the blessing of Jesus. But who will not be ready to forgive the mothers here, though this were true, as we think of the fond regard and deep reverence they cherished towards him? They see him passing through their borders. They hear it is a farewell visit he is paying. These little babes of theirs shall never live to see and know how good, how kind, how holy a one he is; but it would be something to tell them of when they grew up, something that they might be the better of all their lives afterwards, if he would but touch them and pray over them. And so they come, carrying their infants in their arms, first telling the disciples what they want. To them it seems a needless if not impertinent intrusion upon their Master's graver labours. What good can children so young as these get from the Great Teacher? Why foist them upon the notice and care of one who has so much weightier things in hand? Without consulting their Master, they rebuke the bringers of the

children, and would have turned them at once away. Jesus saw it, and he was "much displeased." There was more than rudeness and discourtesy in the conduct of his disciples. There was ignorance, there was unbelief; it was a dealing with infants as if they had no part or share as such in his kingdom. The occasion was a happy one—perhaps the only one that occurred—for exposing their ignorance, rebuking their unbelief, and so, after looking with displeasure at his disciples, Jesus said to them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." We take the last words here in the simplest and most obvious sense, as implying that the kingdom of heaven belongs to infants, is in a measure made up of them. It is quite true that immediately after having said this about the infants Jesus had a cognate word to say to the adults around him. He had to tell them that "whosoever should not receive the kingdom of God as a little child should not enter therein." But that was not said barely and alone as an explanation of his former speech —was not said to take all meaning out of that

speech as having any reference to the little children that were then actually in his presence. It might be very true, and a very needful thing for us to know, that we must be in some sense like to them before we can enter into the kingdom; but that did not imply that they must become like to us ere they can enter it. If all that Jesus meant had been that of suchlike, *i.e.*, of those who, in some particular, resemble little children, is the kingdom of heaven, we can see much less appropriateness in the rebuke of the disciples, and in the action of the Lord which followed immediately upon his use of the expression,—his taking the little children up into his arms and blessing them. We accept, then, the expression as implying not simply that of suchlike, but of them is the kingdom of heaven. It may be thought that a shade of uncertainty still hangs over it. John Newton uses the cautious language, "I think it at least highly probable that in those words our Lord does not only, if at all, here intimate the necessity of our becoming as little children in simplicity, as a qualification without which (as he expressly de-

clares in other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom, but informs us of a fact, that the number of infants who are effectually redeemed to God by his blood, so greatly exceeds the aggregate of adult believers, that his kingdom may be said to consist of little children." It is not necessary, however, while adopting generally the interpretation which Newton thought so highly probable, to press it so far, or to infer that the kingdom is said to be of such because they constitute the majority of its members; enough to receive the saying as carrying with it the consoling truth, that to infants as such the kingdom of heaven belongeth, so that if in infancy they die, into that kingdom they enter. We would be most unwilling to regard this gracious utterance of our Lord, and the gracious act by which it was followed up, as implying something else, or anything less than this.

It is not, however, upon any single saying of our Lord that we ground our belief that all who die in infancy are saved; it is upon the whole genius, spirit, and object of the great redemption. There is indeed a mystery in the death of infants.

No sadder nor more mysterious sight upon this earth than to see a little innocent unconscious babe struggling through the agonies of dissolution, bending upon us those strange imploring looks which we long to interpret but cannot, which tell only of a suffering we cannot assuage, convey to us petitions for help to which we can give no reply. But great as the mystery is which wraps itself around the death, still greater would be that attending the resurrection of infants if any of them perish. The resurrection is to bring to all an accession of weal or woe. In that resurrection infants are to share. Can we believe that, without an opportunity given of personally receiving or rejecting Christ, they shall be subjected to a greater woe than would have been theirs had there been no Redeemer and no redemption? Then to them his coming into the world had been an unmitigated evil. Who can believe it to be so? Who will not rather believe, that even as without sharing in the personal transgression of the first natural head of our race, without sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression, they became involved in

death; even so, though not believing here—the chance not given them,—they will share in the benefit of that life which the second, the spiritual Head of our race, has brought in and dispenses? "Your little ones," said the Lord to ancient Israel, speaking of the entrance into the earthly land of promise,—"Your little ones which ye said should be a prey, and your children which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither." And of that better land into which for us Jesus as the forerunner has entered, shall we not believe that our little ones, who died before they had any knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, go to swell the number of the redeemed, go to raise it to a vast majority of the entire race, mitigating more than we can well reckon the great mystery of the existence here of so much sin, and suffering, and death?

Setting forth afresh, and now in all likelihood about to pass out of that region, there met him one who came running in all eagerness, as anxious not to lose the opportunity, and who kneeled to him with great reverence as having the most

profound respect for him as a righteous man, and who said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus might at once and without any preliminary conversation have laid on him the injunction that he did at the last, and this might equally have served the final end that the Lord had in view, but then we should have been left in ignorance as to what kind of man he was, and how it was that the injunction was at once so needful and so appropriate. It is by help of the preparatory treatment that we are enabled to see further than we should otherwise have done into the character of this petitioner. He was young, he was wealthy, he was a ruler of the Jews. Better than this, he was amiable, he was virtuous, had made it from the first a high object of ambition to be just and to be generous, to use the advantages of his position to win in a right way the favour of his fellow-men. But notwithstanding, after all the successful attempts of his past life, there was a restlessness, a dissatisfaction in his heart. He had not reached the goal. He heard Jesus speak of eternal life,

something evidently far higher than anything he had yet attained, and he wondered how it was to be got at. Nothing doubting but that it must be along the same track that he had hitherto been pursuing, but by some extra work of extraordinary merit, he comes to Jesus with the question, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus saw at once that he was putting all upon moral goodness, some higher virtue to be reached by his own effort entitling him to the eternal life. He saw that he was so fully possessed with this idea that it regulated even his conception of Christ's own personal character, whom he was disposed to look upon rather as a pre-eminently virtuous man than one having any peculiar relationship to God. Checking him, therefore, at the very first—taking exception to the very form and manner of his address, he says, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."

Endeavouring thus to raise his thoughts to the true source of all real goodness, rather than to say anything about his own connexion with the Father, which it is no part of his present object

to speak about, Jesus takes him first upon his own ground. There need be no talk about any one particularly good thing, that behoved to be done, till it was seen whether the common acknowledged precepts of God's law had all been kept. "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and thy mother." As the easiest instrument of conviction, as the one that lay entirely in the very region to which all this youth's thoughts and efforts had been confined, Jesus restricted himself to quoting the precepts of the second table of the law, and says nothing in the meantime about the first. The young man, hearing the challenge, listens to the precepts as they are detailed, and promptly, without apparently a momentary misgiving, he answers, "All these have I observed from my youth." There was no doubt great ignorance, great self-deception in this reply. He knew but little of any one of these precepts in its true significance, in all the strictness, spirituality, and extent of its requirements, who could venture on any such assertion.

Yet there was sincerity in the answer, and it pointed to a bygone life of singular external propriety, and that the fruit not so much of constraint as of a natural amiableness and conscientiousness. As he gave this answer, Jesus beholding him loved him. It was new and refreshing to the Saviour's eye to see such a specimen as this of truthfulness and purity, of all that was morally lovely and of good report among the rulers of the Jews. Here was no hypocrite, no fanatic, here was one who had not learned to wear the garb of sanctimoniousness as a cover for all kinds of self-indulgence; here was one free from the delusion that the strict observance of certain formulas of devotion would stand instead of the mightier matters of justice and of charity; here was one who so far had escaped the contagion of his age and sect, who was not seeking to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but was really striving to keep himself from all that was wrong, and to be towards his fellow-men all that, as he understood it, God's law required. Jesus looked upon this man and loved him.

But the very love he bore him prompted Jesus

to subject him to a treatment bearing in many respects a likeness to that to which he subjected Nicodemus. With not a little, indeed, that was different, there was much that was alike in the two rulers,—the one who came to Jesus by night at the beginning of his ministry in Judea; the one who now comes to him by day at the close of his labours in Peræa: both honest, earnest men, seekers after truth, and lovers of it in a fashion too, but both ignorant and self-deceived; Nicodemus's error rather one of the head than of the heart, flowing from an entire misconception of the very nature of Christ's kingdom; the young ruler's one of the heart rather than of the head, flowing from an inordinate, an idolatrous attachment to his worldly possessions. In either case Christ's treatment was quick, prompt, decisive, laying the axe at once at the root of the evil. Beneath all the pleasing show of outward moralities Christ detected in the young ruler's breast a lamentable want of any true regard to God, any recognition of his supreme and paramount claims. His heart, his trust, his treasure, were in earthly, not in heavenly things. He needed a sharp lesson to

teach him this, to lay bare at once the true state of things within. Christ was too kind and too skilful a physician to apply this or that emollient that might have power to allay a symptom or two of the outward irritation. At once he thrusts the probe into the very heart of the wound. "One thing thou lackest: go thy way," said he, at once assuming his proper place as the representative of God and of his claims,—"go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." The one thing lacking was not the renunciation of his property in bestowing it upon the poor. It was a supreme devotedness to God, to duty—a willingness to give up anything, to give up everything where God required it to be given up, when the holding of it was inconsistent with fidelity to him. This was the one thing lacking. And instead of proclaiming his fatal deficiency in this primary requirement, without which there could be no true obedience rendered to any part of the Divine law, Christ embodies the claim which he knew the young ruler was unprepared to honour—in that form which struck directly

at the idol of his heart, and required its instant and absolute dethronement.

Not for a moment, then, can we imagine that in speaking to him as he did, Jesus was issuing a general command, or laying down a universal condition of the Christian discipleship, or that he was even holding up the relinquishment of earthly possessions as an act of pre-eminent meritoriousness, which all strivers after Christian perfection should set before them as the summit to be reached. There is nothing of all this here. It is a special treatment of a special case. Christ's object being to frame and to apply a decisive touchstone or test whereby the condition of that one spirit might be exposed, he suited with admirable skill the test to the condition. Had that condition been other than it was, the test employed had been different. Had it been the love of pleasure, or the love of power, or the love of fame, instead of the love of money that had been the ruling passion, he would have framed his order so that obedience to it would have demanded the crucifixion of the ruling passion, the renunciation of the one cherished

idol. The only one abiding universal rule that we are entitled to extract from this dealing of our Lord with this applicant being this—that in coming to Christ, in taking on the yoke of the Christian discipleship, it must be in the spirit of an entire readiness to part with all that he requires us to relinquish, and to allow no idol to usurp that inward throne, that of right is his.

Christ's treatment, if otherwise it failed, was in one respect eminently successful. It silenced, it saddened, it sent away. No answer was attempted. No new question was raised. The demand was made in such broad, unmitigated, unambiguous terms, that the young ruler, conscious that he had never felt before the extent or pressure of such a demand, and that he was utterly unprepared to meet, turned away disappointed and dissatisfied. Jesus saw him go, let him go, followed him with no importunities, besought him not to return and to reconsider. It was not the manner of the Saviour to be importunate,—you do not find in him any great urgency or iteration of appeal. When once in any case enough is said or done, the individual

dealt with is left to his own free-will. Gazing after this young ruler as he departed, Jesus then looked round about, and saith to his disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples were astonished at these words, as well they might. What! was the ease or the difficulty of entering into this kingdom to be measured by the little or by the more of this world's goods that each man possessed? A strange premium this on poverty, as strange a penalty on wealth. Jesus notices the surprise that his saying had created, and, aware of the false track along which his disciples' thoughts were running, in a way as affectionate as it was instructive, proceeded to explain the real meaning of what he had just said. "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" It is not the having but the trusting that creates the difficulty. It is not the kind or the quantity of the wealth possessed, but the kind or quantity of the attachment that is lavished upon it. The love of the penny may create as great impediment as the love of the pound. Nor is it our wealth alone that oper-

ates in this way, that raises a mighty obstacle in the way of entering into the kingdom. It is anything else than God and Christ upon which the supreme affection of the spirit is bestowed. A new light dawns upon the disciples' minds as they listen to and begin to comprehend the explanation that their Master now has given, and see the extent to which that explanation goes. They were astonished at the first, but now the astonishment is more than doubled; for if it indeed be true, that before any individual of our race can cross the threshold of the kingdom such a shift of the whole trust and confidence of the heart must take place,—if every earthly living creature,—attachment must be subordinated to the love of God and of Jesus Christ his Son, who then can be saved? for who can effect this great revolution within his own heart, who can take the dearest idol he has known and cast it down in the dust, who can lay hand upon the usurper and eject him, who can raise the rightful owner of it to the throne? Astonished out of measure, the disciples say among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" Is the question needless or inappropriate? Now

is the time, if they have fallen into any mistake, if they are taking too dark, too gloomy views of the matter, if there be aught of error or of exaggeration in the conceptions out of which this question springs,—now is the time for Jesus to rectify the error, to remove the misconception. Does he do so? Nay, but assuming that it is even so—as difficult to be saved as they imagine—his reply is, "With man it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." Taught then by our Lord himself to know what all true entering into his kingdom implies and presupposes, let us be well assured that to be saved in his sense of the word is no such easy thing as many fancy, the difficulty not lying in any want of willingness on his part to save us, not in any hindrance whatever lying there without. All such outward impediments have been, by his own gracious hand, and by the work of his dear Son our Saviour, removed. The difficulty lies within, in our misplaced affections, in our stubborn and obstinate wills, in hearts that will not let go their hold of other things to clasp him home to them as their only

satisfying good. Do you feel the difficulty,—the moral impossibility of this hindrance being taken away by yourselves? Then will you pray to him with whom this, as everything, is possible, that he may turn the possibility into reality. He has done so in the case of multitudes as weak, as impotent as you. He will do it unto you if you desire that it be done, and commit the doing of it into his hands.

XVI.

JESUS AT JERICHO—THE REQUEST OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE.[1]

No district of the Holy Land is more unlike what it once was and what it still might be than that in which Jericho, the city of palms, once stood. Its position, commanding the two chief passes up to the hill country of Judea and Samaria, the depth and fertility of its well-watered soil, and the warmth of its tropical climate, early indicated it as the site of a city which should not only be the capital of the surrounding territory, but the protection of all western Palestine against invaders from the east. Joshua found it so when he crossed the Jordan; and as his first step towards the conquest of the country which lay beyond, laid siege to a city which had walls broad enough to have houses built upon them, and whose spoil

[1] Matt. xx. 17-34; Mark x. 2-52; Luke xviii. 35-43, xx. 2-10.

when taken, its gold and its silver, its vessels of brass and of iron, its goodly Babylonish garments, bore evidence of affluence and of traffic. No town in all the territory which the Israelites afterwards acquired westward of Jordan could compete with Jericho. It fell, was reduced to ruins, and the curse of Joshua pronounced upon the man who attempted to raise again its walls.[1] In the days of Ahab that attempt was made, and though the threatened evil fell upon the maker, the city rose from its ruins to enter upon another stage of progressive prosperity, which reached its highest point when Herod the Great selected it as one of his favourite resorts, beautified it with towers and palaces, becoming so attached to it that, feeling his last illness to have come upon him, he retired there to die. Soon after his death the town was plundered, and some of its finest buildings were destroyed. These,

[1] Within two miles of it, sharing in all its great natural advantages, stood Gilgal, the first encampment of the Israelites, where the ark stood till its removal to Shiloh, which we read of as one of the stations to which Samuel resorted in administering justice throughout the country, where the tribes so often met in the days of Saul, to which the men of Judah went down to welcome David back again to Jerusalem.

however, were speedily restored to all their original splendour by Archelaus, and as he left it Josephus has described it—its stately buildings rising up among groves of palm-trees miles in length, with gardens scattered round, in which all the chief flowers and fruits of eastern lands grew up in the greatest luxuriance. The rarest and most precious among them, the balsam, a treasure "worth its own weight in silver, for which kings made war,"[1] "so that he," says the Jewish historian, as he warms in his recital of all its glories, "he who should pronounce the place to be divine would not be mistaken, wherein is such plenty of trees produced as is very rare, and of the most excellent sort. And, indeed, if we speak of these other fruits, it will not be easy to light on any climate in the habitable earth that can well be compared to it." And such as Josephus has described was Jericho and the country round when Christ's eye rested on them, in descending into the valley of the Jordan, and above the tops of the palm-trees, and the roofs of the palaces, he saw the trace of the road

[1] Martineau.

that led up to Jerusalem. None beside the twelve had gone with him into the retreats of Ephraim and Peræa. But now he is on the track of the companies from the north, who are going up to the Passover, that is to be celebrated at the close of the following week. The time, the company, the road, all serve to bring up to the Saviour's thoughts events that are now so near, to him of such momentous import. A spirit of eager impatience to be baptized with the impending baptism seizes upon him, and gives a strange quickness and a forwardness to his movements. His talk, his gait, his gestures all betoken how absorbed he is; the eye and thought away from the present, from all around, fixed upon some future, the purport of which has wonderfully excited him. His hasty footsteps carry him on before his fellow-travellers. "Jesus went before them," St. Mark tells us, "and they were amazed; and as they followed they were afraid." There was that in his aspect, attitude, and actions that filled them with wonder and with awe. It was not long till an explanation was offered them. He took the twelve aside, and once again,

as twice before, but now with still greater minuteness and particularity of detail, told them what was about to happen within a few days at Jerusalem, how he was to be delivered into the hands of the Jewish rulers, and how they were to deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles, how he was to be mocked and scourged, and spit upon and crucified, till all things that were written by the prophets concerning him should be accomplished, and how on the third day he was to rise again. Everything was told so plainly that we may well wonder that any one could have been at any loss as to Christ's meaning; but the disciples, we are told, "understood none of these things, and the sayings were hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." This only proves what a blinding power preconception and misconception have in hiding the simplest things told in the simplest language—a blinding power often exercised over us now as to the written, as it was then exercised over the apostles as to their Master's spoken words. The truth is, that these men were utterly unprepared at the time to take in the real truth as to what was to happen to their

Master. They had made up their minds, on the best of evidence, that he was the Messiah. He had himself lately confirmed them in that faith. But they had their own notions of the Messiahship. With these such sufferings and such a death as were actually before Jesus were utterly inconsistent. They could be but figurative expressions, then, that he had employed, intended, perhaps, to represent some severe struggle with his adversaries through which he had to pass before his kingdom was set up and acknowledged.

One thing alone was clear—that the time so long looked forward to had come at last. This visit to Jerusalem was to witness the erection of the kingdom. All other notions lost in that, the thought of the particular places they were to occupy in that kingdom entered again into the hearts of two of the apostles—that pair of brothers who, from early adherence, and the amount of sacrifice they had made, and the marked attention that on more than one occasion Jesus had paid to them, might naturally enough expect that if special favours were to be dispensed to any, they would not be overlooked. James and John tell

their mother Salome, who has met them by the way, all that they have lately noticed in the manner of their Master, and all that he has lately spoken, pointing to the approaching Passover as the season when the manifestation of the kingdom was to be made. Mother and sons agree to go to Jesus with the request that in his kingdom and glory the one brother should sit upon his right hand and the other upon his left, a request that in all likelihood took its particular shape and form from what Jesus had said but a few days before, when, in answer to Peter's question, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."[1] What could these thrones, this judging be? Little wonder that the apostles minds were set a-speculating by what still leaves us, after all our speculating, about as much in the dark as ever. But while Salome and

[1] Matt. xix. 27, 28

James and John were proffering their request, and trying to pre-engage the places of highest honour, where was Peter? It had not come into *his* thoughts to seek a private interview with his Master for such a purpose. He had no mother by his side to fan the flame that was as ready to kindle in his as in any of their breasts. That without any thought of one whose natural claims were as good as theirs, James and John should have gone to Jesus and made the request they did, satisfies us at least of this, that it was not the understanding among the twelve that when the Lord had spoken to Peter as he did after his good confession, he had assigned to him the primacy, or indeed any particular pre-eminence, over the rest.

"Ye know not what ye ask." They did it ignorantly, and so far they obtain mercy of the Lord. What it was to be placed on his right and on his left in the scenes that awaited him in Jerusalem, two at least of the three petitioners, John and Salome, shall soon know as they stand gazing upon the central cross of Calvary. "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and

be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say, We can." From this reply it would appear that the disciples understood the Lord as asking them whether they are prepared to drink along with him some cup of sorrow that was about soon to be put into his hands, to be baptized along with him in some baptism of fire to which he was about to be subjected. They are prepared, they think that they can follow him, they are willing to take their part in whatever suffering such following shall entail. Through all the selfishness, and the ambition, and the great ignorance of the future that their request revealed, there shone out in this prompt and no doubt perfectly sincere and honest reply, a true and deep attachment to their Master, a readiness to suffer with him or for him. And he is far quicker to recognise the one than to condemn the other. "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." 'You, James, shall be the first among the twelve that shall seal your testimony with your blood. You, John, shall have the longest if not the largest experi-

ence of what the bearing of the cross shall bring with it. But to sit on my right and on my left in my kingdom and my glory; ask me not for that honour as if it were a thing in the conferring of which I am at liberty to consult my own individual will or taste or humour. It is not mine so to dispense. It is mine to give, but only to those for whom it is prepared of my Father, and who by the course of discipline through which he shall pass them shall be duly prepared for it.'

James and John have to be content with such reply. Their application, though made to Christ when alone, soon after became known to others, and excites no small stir among them. Which of them indeed may cast the first stone at the two? They had all been quarrelling among themselves not long before, as to which of them should be greatest. And they shall all ere long be doing so again. Christ's word of rebuke as he hears of this contention is for all as well as for James and John. He tells us that no such kind of authority and power as is practised in earthly government—the authority of men, rank, or power carrying it dictatorially and tyrannically

over subjects and dependants—is to be admitted among his disciples; greatness among them being a thing to be measured not by the amount of power possessed, but by the amount of service rendered, by their greater likeness to the Son of Man, "who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The contention is thus momentarily hushed, to break out again, when it shall receive a still more impressive rebuke.

Jesus and his disciples, and a great multitude of people who had joined themselves to him by the way, now drew near to Jericho. Of what occurred in and near the city I offer no continuous narrative, for it is difficult to frame such out of the details which the different Evangelists present. St. Mark and St. Luke tell us of one blind man only who was healed. St. Matthew tells us of two. Two of the three Evangelists speak of the healing as having occurred on Christ's departure out of the town, the third of its having taken place on his entrance into it. We may conclude with certainty that there were two, and we may conjecture that there were three blind

men cured on this occasion. In a city so large as Jericho then was, computed to contain well-nigh 100,000 inhabitants,—the number swelled by the strangers on their way to the Passover,—it would not surprise us that more cases than one of the kind described should have occurred. One general remark upon this and all similar discrepancies in the Gospel narratives may be offered. It is quite enough to vindicate the entire truthfulness of each separate account, that we can imagine some circumstance or circumstances omitted by all, the occurrence of which would enable us to reconcile them. How often does it happen that two or three witnesses each tell what they saw and heard; their testimonies taken by themselves present almost insuperable difficulties in the way of reconciling them; yet when the whole in all its minute details is known, the key is then put into our hands by which the apparent discord is at once removed. And when the whole never can be known, is it not the wisest course to let the discrepancies remain just as we find them; satisfied if we can imagine any way by which all that each narrator says is true?

This can easily enough be done in the case before us. Satisfied with this, let us fix our attention on the stories of Bartimeus and Zaccheus, on the two striking incidents by which our Lord's entrance into and exit from Jericho were made for ever memorable. How different in all the outward circumstances of their lot in life were these two men!—the one a poor blind beggar, the other among the richest men in the community. The revenues derived from the palm-trees and balsam-gardens of Jericho were so great, that the grant of them was one of the richest gifts which Antony presented Cleopatra. Herod farmed them of the latter, and intrusted the collection of them to these publicans, of whom Zaccheus was the chief. His position was one enabling him to realize large gains, and we may believe that of that position he had taken the full advantage. Unlike in other things, in this Bartimeus and Zaccheus were at one,—in their eagerness, their earnestness, their perseverance, their resolution to use all possible means to overcome all obstacles thrown in the way of their approach to Christ. The poor blind beggar sits beneath

the shade of some towering palm, waiting to salute each stray passenger as he goes by, and solicit alms. Suddenly he hears the tread as of a great multitude approaching. He wonders what it can be. He asks; they tell him that Jesus of Nazareth is coming, and is about to pass by. Jesus of Nazareth! he had heard of him before, heard of healings wrought by him, of blind eyes opened, of dead men raised. Many a time in his darkness, in his solitude, as he sat alone by the wayside, he had pondered who this great miracle-worker could be, and he had come to the conclusion that he could be no other than the Son of David, the Messiah promised to their fathers. It had never crossed his thoughts that he and this Jesus should ever meet, when now they tell him that he is near at hand, will soon be passing by. He can, he may do that for him which none but he can do. The whole faith and hope of his spirit breathed into it, he lifts the loud and eager cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." They check him, they blame him, in every way they can they try to stop him. He cries "the more a great deal;" it is his one and

only chance. He will not lose it, he will do all he can to reach that ear, to arrest that passer-by. He cries the more a great deal, "Son of David, have mercy on me."

So is it with the poor blind beggar, and so is it with the rich publican. He too hears that Jesus of Nazareth is coming into Jericho. He too has heard much about the Nazarene. He is living now, he may have been living then, in the very neighbourhood where John the Baptist taught, where Jesus was himself baptized. The gospel of the kingdom as preached by both, the gospel of repentance, of turning from all iniquity and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, was familiar to his ears. The Baptist's answer to publicans when they came to him, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you," had sunk into his heart. That was the kingdom, the kingdom of truth, of righteousness, into which now above all things he desired to enter. With a conscience quickened, a heart melted and subdued we know not how, he hears that Jesus is at hand. What would he not give even for a sight of one whom secretly he has learned to reverence

and to love! He goes out, but there is a crowd coming; he cannot stand its pressure; he is little of stature, and in the bustle and the throng will not be able even to catch a sight of Jesus. A happy thought occurs: he sees behind him a large tree which casts its branching arms across the path. He runs and climbs up into the tree. He cares not for the ridicule with which he may be assailed. He cares not for the grotesque position which he, the rich man and the honourable, may be seen to occupy. He is too bent upon his purpose to let that or anything stand in the way of the accomplishment of his desire.

And now let us notice how these two men are treated. Jesus stands still as he comes near the spot where poor Bartimeus stands and cries, points to him, and tells those around him to go and bring him into his presence. The crowd halts. The messengers do Christ's bidding. And now the very men who had been rebuking Bartimeus for his too loud and too impatient entreaties, touched with pity, say, "Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee." He does not need to be told a second time, he does not wait for any

guiding hands to lead him to the centre of the path. His own quick ear has fixed the point from which the summons comes. His own ready arm flings aside the rude garment that he had worn, which might hinder him in his movement. A few eager footsteps taken, he stands in the presence of the Lord. Nor has he then to renew his supplication. Jesus is the first to speak. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" There are not many things among which to choose. There is that one thing that above all others he would have done. "Lord," says he, "that I might receive my sight." And Jesus said, "Receive thy sight, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight."

See now how it fares with Zaccheus. He has got up into the tree, he is sitting there among its branches, half hoping that, seeing all, he may remain himself unseen. The crowd comes up. He does not need to ask which is the one he desires so much to see. There he is, the centre of the throng, his calm, majestic, benignant look and bearing marking him off from all around. The

eyes of the chief publican are bent upon him in one fixed concentrated gaze of wonder and of love, when a new ground of wonder and of gratitude is given. Here too Jesus stops, and looking up he names him by his name, as if he had known him long and well. "Zaccheus," he said, "make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Such is the free spontaneous mercy in either case exercised by our Lord, such is the way in which he meets simplicity of faith, ardour of desire, strenuousness of effort, as seen in the blind beggar and in the rich publican. And what in either case is the return? "Go thy way," said Jesus to Bartimeus. He did not go, he could not go. His blinded eyes are opened. The first object they rest on is their opener. Bright shines the sun above—fair is that valley of the Jordan—gorgeous the foliage of the palm and the sycamore, the acacia and the balsam-tree. New and wondrous sights to him, but he sees them not, or heeds them not. That fresh faculty of vision is exercised on him by whom it had been bestowed, and upon him all the

wealth of its power is lavished. And him "he follows, glorifying God." Not otherwise is it with Zaccheus: "Make haste," said Jesus, "and come down. And he made haste, and came down, and received Christ joyfully," little heeding the derisive looks cast on him as he made his quick descent, the murmurings that arose from the multitude as he received Jesus into his house. The threshold is scarcely crossed when he stands in all humility before Jesus and says, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." One scarce can tell whether he is describing a practice for some time previously pursued, or a purpose then for the first time in the presence of Jesus deliberately taken. In either case the evidence of a true repentance on his part is the same. The man among the Jews who gave the fifth part of his income to the poor was counted as having reached the height of perfection as to almsgiving. Zaccheus gives one-half, and not one-fifth. The law of Moses required in one special case alone that a fourfold restitution should be made. Zac-

cheus, in every instance in which he can remember that by any dishonourable practice on his part any man had suffered loss, promises that restitution to that extent should be made to him. Jesus, accepting the evidence of a true repentance that is thus presented, makes no criticism upon the course of conduct indicated, suggests no change, but says, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham"—once a lost sheep of the chosen fold, lost, but now found by the good Shepherd, and by him welcomed back,—"for the Son of man," he adds, "is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

One general feature of these incidents at Jericho let us now glance at, as singularly appropriate to this particular period of our Lord's history,—the absence of all reserve, the full disclosure of himself and of his redemption which he makes. Other blind men had called him the Son of David, but he had straitly charged them not to make him known. No such charge is given to Bartimeus. He is permitted to follow him and glorify God as loudly, as amply as he

can. Not till the last stage of his ministry in the north had he ever spoken even to his disciples of his death. Now he not only speaks of them more plainly and explicitly than ever before, but he goes on to announce the great intention and object of his death. The Son of Man, he declares, is come "to give his life a ransom for many, to seek and to save that which was lost." Thus it is, as the time is now so near, and as all the reasons for that reserve which Jesus had previously studied are removed, that he holds up his death as the payment of the great price of our redemption, the ransom given by the Living One for the lost.

Two better instances illustrative of how the sinner and the Saviour are brought together, of what true faith is, and what true repentance, you could not well desire, than those of Bartimeus and Zaccheus, capable each of manifold spiritual applications. We can but gather up the general warnings and great encouragements that they convey. Sinners we all by nature and practice are—as poor, as blind, as beggared as Bartimeus was—as thoughtless, careless, reckless, worldly-

minded as Zaccheus. And Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. It is but a single day we have for meeting with him, that short day of life, the twelve hours of which are so swiftly running out. Let us but be as earnest to see him as those two men were, as careless of what others say or do, as resolute to overcome all difficulties, and we shall find that he will be as ready to hear, to heal, to come to us, to take up his abode with us, to bring salvation with him, to gather us, the lost, into the fold of the saved.

Jericho is changed from what it was. So little is left of the city, of its hippodrome and amphitheatre, its towers and its palaces, that it is difficult to determine its site. Its gardens and its groves are gone, not one solitary palm-tree for a poor blind beggar to sit beneath, nor a sycamore for any one to climb. The City of Fragrance it was called of old. There remains now but the fragrance of those deeds of grace and mercy done there by him who in passing through it closed his earthly journeyings, and went up thence to Jerusalem to die.

XVII.

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY.[1]

In the whole bearing and conduct of Jesus in and about Jericho there was much to indicate that some great crisis in his history was at hand. It does not surprise us to be told of the disciples believing "that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." It was because he knew that they were so misconceiving the future that lay before him and them, that, either in the house of Zaccheus, or afterwards on the way up to Jerusalem, Jesus addressed to them the parable of the Pounds. He would have them know, and could they but have penetrated the meaning of that parable they would have seen, that so far from any such kingdom as they were dreaming of being about to be set up for him in Jerusalem, he was going through the dark avenue of death to another, to a far country, to receive the king-

[1] Matt. xxvi. 6-13; Mark xiv. 3-9; John xii. 1-8.

dom there, and after a long interval to return; and that, so far from their being about to share the honours and rewards of a newly erected empire, they were to be left without a head, each man to occupy and to labour till he came again. Another parable, that of the Labourers in the Vineyard, spoken but a day or two before, had a kindred object—was intended to check the too eager and ambitious thirst for the distinctions and recompences that the apostles imagined were on the eve of being dispensed. The addressing of two such parables as these to his disciples, with the specific object of rectifying what he knew to be their false ideas and expectations, the readiness with which he listened to the cry of the blind beggars by the wayside, and the interest that he took in the chief of the publicans, conspire to show how far from a mere narrow or selfish one was the interest with which Jesus looked forward to what was awaiting him in Jerusalem. During the two days' journey from Peræa through Jericho to the holy city, his thoughts were often and absorbingly fixed on his approaching sufferings and death, but it was not so much

in their isolated and personal as in their public and world-wide bearings and issues that he was contemplating them; nor had the contemplation any such effect as to make him less attentive to the state of thought and feeling prevailing among his disciples, or less ready to be interested in those who, like Bartimeus and Zaccheus, threw themselves in his way.

In coming down into the valley of the Jordan, Jesus had joined the large and growing stream of people from the north and the east, passing up to the approaching Passover. There would be many Galileans among the group who had not seen him now for many months, and who, if they had not heard of it before, must have heard now at Jericho of all that had happened at the two preceding Feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication, of his last great miracle at Bethany, of the great excitement that had been created, and of the resolution of the Sanhedrim to put him to death. And now he goes up to face these rulers, to throw himself, as they fancy, upon the support of the people, to unfold the banner of the new kingdom, and call on all his followers to rally round it. His Gali-

lean friends heartily go in with what they take to be his design; they find the people generally concurring in and disposed to further them. One can imagine what was thought and felt, and hoped and feared, by those who accompanied Jesus as he left Jericho. A few hours' walk would now carry him and them to the metropolis. It was Friday, the 8th day of their Jewish month Nisan. The next day was Saturday, their Jewish Sabbath. On the Thursday following the lamb was to be slain, and the Passover festival to commence. The great body of the travellers press on, to get into the town before the sunset, when the Sabbath commences. Jesus and his apostles turn aside at Bethany, where the house of Martha and Mary and Lazarus stands open to receive them. Here in this peaceful retreat the next day is spent, a quiet Sabbath for our Lord before entering on the turmoil of the next few days. The companions of his last day's journey have in the meantime passed into Jerusalem. It is already thronged with those who had come up from the country to purify themselves for the feast. With one and all the engrossing topic is

Jesus of Nazareth. Gathering in the courts of the Temple, they ask about him, they hear what has occurred; they find that "both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he was, he should show it, that they might take him." What, in the face of such an order, will Jesus do? "What think ye," they say to one another, "that he will *not* come to the feast?" But now they hear from the newly arrived from Jericho that he is coming, means to be at the feast, is already at Bethany. They hear that Lazarus, the man whom he so recently raised from the dead, is also there. He may not have been there till now. He may have accompanied Jesus to Ephraim, or chosen some other place of temporary retreat, for a bitter enmity had sprung up against him as well as against Jesus. "The chief priests had consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews believed on Jesus." Whether he had retired for a time or not, Lazarus is now at Bethany. Many, unable to restrain their curiosity, go out to the village, "not for Jesus' sake

only, but that they might see Lazarus also." It was but a short distance, not much more than the Sabbath-day's journey. During this day, while Jesus and Lazarus are there together, many visitors go forth to feast their eyes upon the sight, and on returning to quicken the excitement among the multitude.

It was on the evening of the Saturday, when the Sabbath was over, and the next, the first day of the week, had begun, that they made Jesus a supper in the house of Simon, who once had been a leper, some near relative in all likelihood of the family of Lazarus, and Jesus sits at this feast between the one whom he had cured of his leprosy and the other whom he had raised from the dead. Martha serves. She had not so read the rebuke before administered to her as to believe that serving—the thing that she most liked, to which her disposition and her capabilities at once prompted her—was in itself unlawful or improper, that her only duty was to sit and listen. But she had so profited by the rebuke that, concerned as she is that all due care be taken that this feast be well got through, she turns now no jealous look upon

her sister, leaves Mary without murmuring or reproach to do as she desires. And Mary seizes the opportunity now given. She has not now Jesus to herself. She cannot, as in the privacy of her own dwelling, sit down at his feet to listen to the gracious words coming from his lips. But she has an alabaster phial of fragrant ointment—her costliest possession—one treasured up for some unknown but great occasion. That occasion has arrived. She gets it, brings it, approaches Jesus as he sits reclining at the table, pours part of its contents upon his head, and resolves that its whole contents shall be expended upon this office. She compresses the yielding material of which the phial was composed, breaks it, and pours the last drop of it upon his feet, flinging away the relics of the broken vessel, and wiping his feet with her hair. Kingly guest at royal banquet could not have had a costlier homage of the kind rendered to him. That Mary had in her possession so rich a treasure may be accepted as one of the many signs that her family was one of the wealthiest in the village. That she now took and spent the whole of it upon Jesus, was but a final expression

of the fulness and the intensity of her devotion and her love.

Half hidden behind the Saviour's reclining form, she might have remained unnoticed, but the fragrant odour rose and filled the house, and drew attention to her deed. Cold and searching and jealous eyes are upon her, chiefly those of one who never had any cordial love to Jesus, who never had truly sympathized with the homage rendered him, who held the bag, had got himself appointed keeper of the small purse they had in common, who already had been tampering with the trust, and greedily filching from the narrow stores committed to his care. Love so ardent, consecration so entire, sacrifice so costly as that of Mary, he could not appreciate. He disliked it, condemned it; it threw such a reproach by contrast upon his own feeling and conduct to Christ. And now to his envious, avaricious spirit it appears that he has got good ground for censure. He had been watching the movements of Mary, had seen her bring forth the phial, had measured its size, had gauged the quantity, estimated the quality, and calculated the value of its

contents. And now he turns to his fellow-disciples, and whispers in their ears the invidious question, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Three hundred pence! equal to the hire of a labourer for a whole year,—a sum capable of relieving many a child of poverty, of bringing relief to many a house of want. Had Judas got the money into his own hands, instead of being all lavished on this act of outward attention, had it been thrown into the common stock, it would not have been upon the poor that it should have been spent. He would have managed that no small part of the money should have had a very different direction given to it. But it serves his mean malicious object to suggest that such might have been its destination. And by his craft, which has a show in it of a wise and thoughtful benevolence, he draws more than one of his fellow-apostles along with him, so that not loud but deep, the murmuring runs round the table, and they say to one another, "To what purpose is this waste? this ointment might have been sold for so much, and given to the poor."

Mary hears the murmuring, sees the eyes of one and another turned askance and condemningly upon her, shrinks under the detracting criticism of the Lord's own apostles, begins to wonder whether she may not have done something wrong, been guilty of a piece of extravagance which even Jesus may perhaps condemn. It had been hard for her before to bear the reproach of her bustling sister, but harder a thousand times to bear the reproach of the twelve. But neither then nor now did she make any answer, offer any defence of herself. She did not need. She had one to do that office for her far better than she could have done it for herself. Jesus is there to throw the mantle of his protection over her, to explain and vindicate her deed. "Let her alone," he said, "why trouble ye the woman? she hath wrought a good work upon me." He might have singled out the first adverse criticiser of Mary's act, the suggester and propagator of the censorious judgment that was making its round of the table. Then and there he might have exposed the hollowness, the hypocrisy of the pretence about *his* caring for the poor, upon

which the condemnation of Mary was based. And doing so, he might have made the others blush that they had given such ready ear to a speech that such a mean and malignant spirit had first broached. He did not do this, at least he said nothing that had any peculiar and exclusive reference to Judas. But there must have been something in our Lord's manner,—a look perhaps, such as he bent afterwards on Peter in the judgment-hall,—that let Judas know that before Jesus he stood a detected thief and hypocrite. And it was not to weep bitterly that he went forth from that supper, but with a spirit so galled and fretted that he took the earliest opportunity that occurred to him to commune with the chief priests and the Temple guard as to how he might betray his Master, and deliver him into their hands.

Losing sight of him, let us return to Christ's defence of Mary. "She hath done a good work," he said, 'a noble work, one not only far from censure, but worthy of all praise. She hath done it unto *me*, done it out of pure deep love—a love that will bring the best, the costliest

thing she has, and think it no waste, but rather its fittest, worthiest application, to bestow it upon me.' Upon that ground alone, upon his individual claims as compared with all others, Jesus might well have rested his vindication of Mary's act. Nay, might he not have taken the censure of her as a disparagement of himself? All these his general claims,—which go to warrant the highest, costliest, most self-sacrificing services that an enthusiastic piety can render,—he in this instance is content to waive, fixing upon the peculiarity of his existing position and the specialty of the particular service that she has rendered, as supplying of themselves an ample justification of the deed that had been condemned. The claims of the poor had been set up, as if they stood opposed to any such expenditure of property as that made by Mary in this anointing of the Saviour. It was open to Christ to say that it was an altogether needless, false, injurious conflict thus sought to be stirred up,—as if to give to him, to do anything for him, were to take so much from the poor; as if no portion of the great fund of the Church's wealth was available

for any purely devout and religious purpose till all the wants of all the poor were met and satisfied—wants, be it remembered, of such a kind that though we supplied them all to-day, would emerge in some new form to-morrow—wants which it is impossible so to deal with as wholly and permanently to relieve. He is no enlightened pleader for the poor who would represent them and their necessities as standing in the way of the indulgence of those warm impulses of love to Christ, out of which princely benefactions, as well as many a deed of heroic self-sacrifice, have emanated. The spirit of Judas, indeed—cold, calculating, carping, disparaging,—has often crept even into the Christian society, and men bearing the name of Jesus have often been ready, when great donations on behalf of some strictly religious enterprise were spoken of, to condemn them off-hand on this one ground, that it would have been much better had the money been bestowed upon the poor. Just as when a large estate was sold in this country, the proprietor, seized with a favourite idea, having resolved to devote the entire proceeds of the sale to Christian missions in India, there were not wanting those

who said—I quote now the words of one of them —"What a mad scheme this of Haldane's! How many poor people might that money have fed and clothed?" The world, let us bless God for it, is not so poor that there is but one way—that, namely, of almsgiving—for gratifying those generous impulses which visit the heart and impel to acts of singular liberality. He who put it into the heart of Mary to do what she did towards the person of Christ, has put it into the hearts of others since to do like things towards his cause. And if in many such like instances there be more of mere emotion, more of the indulgence of individual taste than of staid and wise-hearted Christian benevolence, let us not join with the condemners of them, unless we be prepared to put a check upon all the free, spontaneous expressions of those sentiments of veneration, gratitude, and love to Jesus Christ, out of which some of the most chivalrous and heroic deeds have sprung by which the history of our race has been adorned.

It is, however, as has been already said, upon somewhat narrower ground that Christ vindicates the act of Mary. It was one of such personal

attention to him as could be shown to him only while he was present in the flesh. "The poor," said he, "ye have with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, but me ye have not always." Further still, it was one that but once only in all his earthly life could be shown to Jesus, for "in that she hath poured this ointment on me, she is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burial." Had Mary any definite idea that she was doing beforehand what Joseph and Nicodemus would have no time and opportunity for doing, what the two other Marys would go out to do to find only that the need for its being done was over and gone? It may be assuming too much for her to believe that with a clearer insight and a simpler faith in what Jesus had said than had yet been reached by any of the twelve, she anticipated the death and burial of her Master as near at hand. But neither can we think that she acted without some vague presentiment that she was seizing upon a last opportunity, that the days of such intercourse with Jesus were drawing to an end. She knew the perils to which he would be exposed whenever he entered Jerusalem. She had heard him speak

of his approaching sufferings and death. To others the words might appear to be without meaning, or only to be allegorically interpreted, but the quick instinct of her deeper love had refused to regard them so, and they had filled her bosom with an indefinite dread. The nearer the time for losing, the more intense became the clinging to him. Had she believed as the others around her did, had she looked forward to a speedy triumph of Jesus over all his enemies, and to the visible erection of his kingdom, would she have chosen the time she did for the anointing? would she not have reserved to a more fitting opportunity a service that was more appropriate to the crowning of a new monarch than the preparing of a living body for the tomb? In speaking as he did, Jesus may have been only attributing to Mary a fuller understanding of and simpler faith in his own prophetic utterances than that possessed at the time by any of his disciples. Such a conception of her state of mind and heart would elevate Mary to a still higher pinnacle than that ordinarily assigned to her, and we can see no good reason for doubting that it was even so. But it does not require that

we should assign to her any such pre-eminence of faith. It was the intensity of the personal attachment to Jesus that her act expressed which drew down upon it the encomium of the Lord. Thus he had to say of it what he could say of so few single services of any of his followers,—that in it she did what she could, did all she could,—in that direction there was not a step further that she could have taken. Of all like ways and forms of expressing attachment there was not a higher one that she could have chosen. Her whole heart of love went out in the act, and therefore Jesus said of it, "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her,"—the one and only case in which Jesus ever spoke of the after earthly fame of any service rendered to him, predicting for it such a wide-spread reputation and such an undying remembrance. Thus said Chrysostom, when discoursing upon this incident, "While the victories of many kings and generals are lost in silence, and many who have founded states and reduced nations to subjection are not known by reputation or by name, the pouring of

ointment by this woman is celebrated throughout the whole world. Time hath passed away, but the memory of the deed she did hath not waned away. But Persians and Indians and Scythians and Thracians, and the race of the Mauritanians, and they who inhabit the British Isles, publish abroad an act which was done in Judea privately in a house by a woman." Fourteen hundred years have passed and gone since in the great church of St. Sophia at Constantinople Chrysostom uttered these words, referring to these British Isles as one of the remotest places of the then known world. The centuries that have rolled by since then have witnessed many a revolution, not the least wonderful among them the place that these British Isles now occupy, but still wider and wider is the tale of Mary's anointing of her Master being told, the fragrance of the ointment spreading, yet losing nothing of its sweetness, such fresh vitality, such self-preserving power, lodging in a simple act of pure and fervid love.

One single parting glance let us cast upon our Saviour as he presents himself to our eye upon this occasion. He sits at a festive board. He is surrounded by men looking joyously forward to

days and years of success and triumph. But he knows what they do not—that on that day week his body will be lying in the new-made sepulchre. And he accepts the anointing at Mary's hand as preparing his body for the burial. He sits the invited guest of a man who had been a leper, surrounded in that village home by a few humble followers. With serene eye he looks down into the future, and abroad over the earth, and speaks of it as a thing of certainty that this gospel —the gospel of glad tidings of salvation in his name—was to be preached throughout the whole world. If it be true that Jesus thought and felt and spoke and acted as the Evangelists represent him as having done that night, I do not need to say how vain the attempt to explain away his foresight of the future, to reduce it to the dimensions of the highest human wisdom sagaciously anticipating what was afterwards to occur.

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